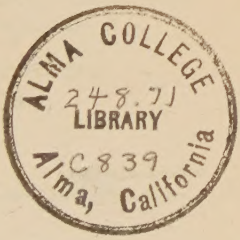
SHORT READINGS FOR RELIGIOUS

BY THE RIGHT REV.

BISHOP COX, O.M.I.

VICAR APOSTOLIC OF THE TRANSVAAL

THIRD EDITION



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FATHER CHARLES COX, of our Congregation, has the permission of his Superiors to publish the work bearing the title 'Short Readings for Religious,' written by him.

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Archbp. of Ptolemais,
SUP. GEN.

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We are happy to recommend Reverend Father Charles Cox's work: 'Short Readings for Religious.'

This work is admirably adapted for the daily use of religious. In it they will find a short and clear commentary on the principles which should guide their conduct. Its pages afford ample matter for self-examination and instruction. Religious should be glad to have such a book in their hands. We are grateful to the author for this valuable addition to the library of religious reading.

✠ AUGUSTIN DONTENWILL, O.M.I.,
Archbishop of Ptolemais, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Rome, Italy,
February 17, 1911.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.

THE author ventures to hope that this little work may serve three purposes.

First, that it may be as an epitome of instruction concerning what the religious life is, and what spiritual effort is expected in those who are called to it. Conduct that would be faulty is portrayed, both to elucidate the subject under treatment and to show what ought to be avoided or corrected.

Secondly, that it may furnish points for lessons or conferences addressed to religious.

Thirdly, that it may serve as a handbook to offer to aspirants to a religious vocation, that they may obtain a true idea of what will be required of them, and be imbued with a right spirit in seeking to enter religion.

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SHORT READINGS FOR RELIGIOUS

1. Religious Vocation.—I.

Religious are persons who by their state of life are distinguished from seculars—that is, from those who follow ordinary avocations in the world.

They become religious by a special and privileged vocation. They embrace a state of life in which, walking in the ways of perfection taught by our Lord, they put away from themselves the chief obstacles to Divine charity, and labour to practise the virtues which are especially acceptable to God.

In order to give the necessary stability to their aim and efforts, and the required permanency to their more perfect mode of life, they, under the direction of the Church, make the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and undertake to observe the holy rules of their Institute. All this supposes both aptitude for the fulfilment of the duties of the religious state and a supernatural attraction to that state.*

* As this work is not a theological treatise on the religious state, the author refers his readers to theological works (such

Religious enter the ranks of servants consecrated to God. Their vocation should therefore afford their mind the greatest consolation; for it is to them a token of God's predilection, and it may even be regarded as a sign of their predestination. But everything depends upon their being faithful to their calling.

We will consider (*a*) from what, and (*b*) to what, religious are called, (*c*) the character of the home they enter, and (*d*) how they are required to be both genuine and generous in pursuing their vocation.

(*a*) We have to consider from what religious are called, and we say that they are called from the world. It is a world of business, pleasure, toil, anxiety, and vanity. God has indeed His faithful servants in the world, but there are also many unfaithful ones. In the world there is, it is true, the practice of many admirable virtues; but there are also in it many vices, and many dangers to the soul and to salvation. When we say that religious leave the world, what do we mean?

In pursuit of their holy vocation, religious are called to leave home, and even, if God so wills, their country. They remain bound to their relatives by the ties of blood and affection; but, as they have been drawn away from their society by God's grace, in order to embrace a higher manner of life, they no longer associate intimately with them, and their

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as Father Humphrey's 'Elements of Religious Life') for a fuller definition of it, and for a more ample treatment of the subject of religious vocation. Father A. Devine's 'Convent Life' is a useful book of practical explanations.

personal relations with them must be conformable with the obligations of the religious state. In some cases separation from relatives is the first severe trial which persons called to religion experience, and the resistance of nature may prove a snare to them. They should make known this trial to their spiritual adviser, who will know how to guide and encourage them.

Religious, if they enjoyed such things in the world, are called from their possessions ,and from a position of independent authority: for Christ is to be their portion and their Master. But since they do not regret their having been called away from the world, they willingly embrace all the sacrifices which their holy vocation entails. They are not sad, like the young man who had great possessions, and who was unwilling to part with them (St. Matt. xix. 22). The greater the sacrifices they have to make, the more meritorious is their correspondence with their vocation. There are generous souls who rejoice when they have much to sacrifice; for they deem nothing too precious to part with, and nothing too arduous to accomplish, in order to embrace so privileged a vocation. To them the blessing of belonging to the religious state is as the 'one pearl of great price' (St. Matt. xiii. 46), to purchase which they are prepared to part with everything.

(*b*) To what, then, are religious called? They leave their worldly home to enter the home of the religious life. This is another, and a holy and happy, home. When they enter it they do not find

themselves among strangers, but in a new family, of which they themselves become members. While the walls of the religious house afford shelter for all, and all sit at a common table, a spiritual bond of charity unites all their hearts, and all labour together for the same pious ends. The ties of the new family are holy, spiritual, mutual, and constant. When once the yoke of religion has been embraced, all distinctions arising from nationality, social standing, wealth, or talent, cease; and, irrespective of such considerations, there is found among religious a new relationship, manifested by mutual respect, consideration, and affection, and also by mutual help. Moreover, when religious are changed from one house to another, they find wherever they go the same family spirit, and the same manifestations of religious relationship.

(*c*) The home of religion has its particular character. Visitors are struck with the silence, cleanliness, and order, which reign in religious houses. What is on the surface is an indication of what lies below. Moral disorder, rebellion against authority, and worldly vanity and dissipation, should have no place in homes of persons consecrated to God. As religious are united by spiritual ties, and are bound ever to tend to perfection, and as they all are ever engaged in working for the same pious ends, their home is one of piety and of peace. The real head of the family is our Lord, Whose voice has called them to His special service. For His sake they work and obey; and they are happy in belonging to Him, and in seeking to do His will

in all things. The home of religion thus becomes to religious a shelter from the dangers of the world. The worldly atmosphere and worldly ways are excluded from it, and its character and surroundings tend to promote true religiousness of soul. Therefore do religious love their holy calling, their Institute, their community, and the house which shelters them and witnesses their piety and their labours.

(*d*) If religious would fully enjoy the blessings of the holy state to which they are called, they must correspond faithfully with the grace of their vocation, and they should therefore ever strive to fulfil its obligations. Unhappily, there are religious who fall away from fervour, and become unfaithful both to the spirit and to the duties of their vocation. Such as these become discontented, restless, and unhappy. The fault is all their own. Devout religious are genuine in their religious spirit and generous in action.

Religious undertake to lead a special kind of life, under the obligations of holy vows and under a rule. This obligation is rightly regarded as the yoke of religion. While religious bear this yoke willingly and in every way dutifully, it is a sweet yoke. There must not be any unreality about their being religious. They must not play at being religious, nor pretend to be what they are not. They must not be merely 'habit' religious, content with the exterior garb; nor merely 'school-children' religious, only serving the master's eye. The holy virtue of religion must enter intimately into their soul, spirit, and character.

Then will they be genuine religious—religious before God, religious everywhere and at all times, as much so when all alone as when under the eyes of their Superior, or of the other members of the community. This is what their holy vocation demands of them.

Religious, moreover, are required to be generous in spirit and in action. They have not been called to the religious state to consult their own ease and comfort, but to devote themselves to the works of their Institute. They must give their whole heart and their whole life to God. Their offering, to be an acceptable sacrifice in God's sight, must be a full one: it should be as a holocaust. It will not be as a holocaust if anything be kept back or withdrawn from it Therefore should religious accept all the conditions of the state of life which they embrace—its sorrows as well as its joys, its trials and difficulties as well as its consolations. It is not for them to lay down or look for conditions (other than those sanctioned by Canon Law or by their rule), either when they enter religion or after admission. They should, therefore, display a generous spirit when seeking admission; and they should ever strive to be devoted, true, and constant in fulfilling what their holy vocation demands of them. They may, at the same time, be sure that the holy rule which requires on their part devotedness and generosity also requires on the part of their Superiors that due consideration shall be shown them, so that their generous spirit may not be overtaxed, and that impossible burdens may not be imposed on them.

Religious should, from time to time, especially in the time of a retreat, study the nature of their obligations, so as to understand what these are, and to examine if they are faithful to them. They should cherish their privileged vocation, convinced that upon their fidelity to it depends their peace of soul and the merits they lay by for the future recompense. If they set a true value upon it, they will be constant in returning thanks to God for His goodness in having called them to religion; they will ever pray for grace to be good religious; and they will, moreover, desire for others also the blessings God has so lovingly bestowed upon themselves.

2. Religious Vocation.—II.

Religious enter into religion led by a special vocation. This vocation draws them away from the world, and brings them into another sphere of life. It is not their parents who send them, but their vocation is a grace from God. Led by this grace, they themselves wish to leave the world, and to consecrate their life to God in the religious state.

Religious may learn to appreciate their vocation and the terms and ends of it (*a*) by studying what our Lord required of the young man whom He invited to become His disciple, and (*b*) by contrasting the sacrifices they are called upon to make with the precious rewards God bestows in return. If religious leave the world, and embrace a state of poverty, their gain and reward more than compensate them for the sacrifices they make.

(*a*) Religious, if they would understand what they have done, should recall the instance of the young man who asked our Lord the way to life everlasting, and upon whom our Lord looked with love (St. Mark x. 21). Our Lord invited him to the apostolic life, saying: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me' (St. Matt. xix. 21). The young man was invited to leave all things, and, in return, he was to possess the greatest of all treasures, even heaven itself. The vocation of religious is of a similar kind. How great is the contrast between what they abandon for God's sake and the recompense they receive in return!

Some may say that, having given themselves to God, they have yet to bear many trials. We must not complain against God. It behoves such religious to weigh the conditions with a reverential spirit, and with a spirit of faith and trust in God, which will fill them with the assurance that all is, and will ever be, as it ought to be.

Religious are promised a treasure—namely, the everlasting treasure of the heavenly reward. To purchase this treasure they are required to pay a price. Could anything be more reasonable? But the religious who complain wish to acquire the treasure without purchasing it. They ask that there shall be only one side to the bargain: they demand that the treasure shall be a gratuitous gift. Our Lord made no such promise to the young man, and He makes no such promise to them. The young man was required to part with his vast

possessions, and to follow our Lord, to share our Lord's humiliations and sufferings. Upon these conditions he was to receive treasure in heaven: 'Thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Religious will receive the everlasting reward upon similar conditions. How is it in the case of all good people? The Psalmist says: 'Many are the afflictions of the just' (Ps. xxxiii. 20). These afflictions are the price they have to pay for God's special favour, and for the everlasting reward.

Religious should, then, bear in mind that they are now only on the way, fulfilling the conditions, and working out their vocation. It is theirs now to comply with what is demanded as their part of the bargain. They have not, however, been called upon to leave vast possessions; nor are they required to bear in the same measure as did the Apostles the humiliations and sufferings of Christ. Let none, therefore, complain against God. Let none lament the real or pretended severity of the conditions of their vocation.

(*b*) Approaching the subject with a reverential and submissive spirit, let us now proceed to consider how great the contrast is between what is required on the part of religious and what God on His part bestows in return.

1. Religious have to leave the world. Have they seen anything very attractive in a worldly life? What has been their experience of the world? Can they say that it is a world without miseries, hardships, strifes, and jealousies? Is it a world without domestic and social misunderstandings, and without

losses and disappointments? Is it a world without cares, anxieties, heart-burnings, and ingratitude? And has not the world also its shady side of vices and disorders, with many offences against faith and religion? This is the world which religious are called upon to leave.

Contrast life in the world with the peace, virtue, and saintliness that are found in religion. Contrast its occupations with those of religious, and its dissipations and joys with the holy and innocent pleasures found in the religious life. Finally, contrast it too with the heavenly bliss promised to devout religious.

2. Religious have to embrace poverty. What, we may ask, have they seen so desirable in riches? Are there no worries and anxieties attached to them, both in acquiring them and in holding them? Are riches never abused? Have not religious observed how, for their riches, some men are esteemed, while others are envied and hated, and how riches do not always bring happiness to their possessors? Have they not seen that in some cases riches become indirectly an occasion of injustice and vice? Religious turn away from them: riches have no charm for them.

Contrast now the condition of men possessed of wealth with the contentment found in religion, where poverty is professed. In religion the necessities of life are provided for; and avarice, bargaining, covetousness, and usury are unknown. In religion, excess, troublesome abundance, over-anxiety, envy, and contention about worldly goods, have no place; but we meet there with contentment, moderation,

and voluntary self-denial. Finally, consider the future reward; for to those who leave all things for Christ's sake are promised the riches of the heavenly kingdom.

We will not stay to contrast the vanities and the social exigencies of life in the world with the pious and noble aims which religious put before themselves, and with the meritorious works to which they devote themselves.

On the one side, then, we find that religious have to leave the world, to profess poverty, and to fulfil the duties of their holy calling. They are not, it is true, relieved of trials of one kind or another incidental to their state of life; for they have embraced the Cross, and they wish to submit themselves dutifully and generously to the yoke of religion. We find also that even in the world and in the pursuit of wealth there are cares, labours, and miseries. We may even say that the trials of worldly persons are severer than those which are the portion of religious. Why, then, we may ask, do some religious deem it hard that their life is not all 'a bed of roses'? All things being considered, is not their life from every point of view a happier one than that of most persons in the world?

What, now, do we find on the other side? We meet with many persons in the world who envy the peace and happiness enjoyed by religious. This being so, do not religious themselves see anything in their calling to make them love it and prefer it to every other? Have they not left everything to possess all things? Their life in this world is

sheltered from many miseries and is blessed. The yoke of Christ which they have embraced is a sweet one, and sacred assurances comfort them. Moreover, they belong to our Lord by a special title. He is their support and consolation, and His favouring providence watches over them. Thus will it be during the whole of their life, and at death they will realize the Divine promises and enter into everlasting life. Their cross will be exchanged for a crown, and the yoke for a throne and a kingdom.

With these consoling considerations before them, what view should religious entertain concerning their privileged vocation, and what effort should they be prepared to make to live faithful to it? They should ever prize and love it; they should strive to disengage their heart more and more from the world and its passing joys; and they should lift up their eyes hopefully to the heavenly reward.

3. Some Things Proper to Every Institute.

In religious Institutes there are many things which are common to all such societies, but every Institute has some things which are specially proper to itself, and which therefore distinguish it from others. The Carthusian and Dominican Orders differ from the Benedictine and Franciscan Orders; and the Institute of the Visitation differs from the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

For the most part, the broad distinction between the various Institutes is seen in (*a*) their spirit, (*b*) their works, and (*c*) their rule. If, therefore,

religious would be known as true and loyal members of their Institute, they should enter devotedly into what its spirit, works, and rule demand.

(*a*) In the first place, they should be animated with the true spirit of their Institute. Their Institute is not a dead body. It has a spirit—a spirit of its own. It is with the Institute as with human beings, who all partake of a common humanity, but who yet have a spirit and character of their own. Religious, animated with the true spirit of their Institute, will ever seek to be pious, submissive to rule and to their superiors, charitable in their relations with one another, and devoted to observance and to the duties appointed to them; for religious life could not exist under other conditions. Take away piety, and there will be dissipation and worldliness; take away submission, and there will be independence; take away charity, and there will be selfishness and contention; and take away devotedness, and there will be tepidity, neglect, and half-heartedness.

That religious may be animated with the true spirit of their Institute, not only must they overcome every spirit opposed to the Christian idea and to true religiousness, but they must also seek to bring into subjection the spirit of individualism and of independence. To do this in a practical way they should avoid looking for special consideration and seeking to have everything their own way. Since they live in community, and since, together with and equally with others, they are members of the Institute, a common spirit should animate all. Again,

where there is a spirit of independence there will be no fast bond with others or dutiful relations with superiors; and consequently there will be resistance to lawful authority and a want of unity in action.

When the true spirit of their Institute animates religious, then will they love it, and strive that it may be honoured. In their lives they will be so bound up with it that they will all be sensitive to its joys, successes, trials, and sorrows, and make them their own. This will tend materially to the consolation and strength of their Institute.

(*b*) Every Institute has its own works Holy Church approves of religious Institutes, and cherishes them because of their works; and it continues to do so only so long as they are faithful in carrying them out. Some Institutes have, under God's providence, been called into existence to give missions; others to undertake and promote the work of education; and others, again, to devote themselves to various works of charity. The different classes of useful works which engage the members of the various Institutes account in great part for the distinctions which exist between them.

The members of an Institute are required to interest themselves in the works which are within its scope; therefore should they desire the success of these works. Moreover, they should fit themselves to accomplish them, and they should devote themselves with their strength, energies, and talents to their accomplishment. If they fail in these respects, can it be said that they are dutiful members of their Institute, and that they are doing

what is required of them for its maintenance and honour? If they fail in these respects, they may share the fate of the servant who buried his master's talent (St. Matt. xxv. 24-30).

It should be noted that in religious Institutes greater store is set upon the pious spirit with which their works are accomplished than upon the amount of work that is done. Religious, therefore, should ever strive to perform their duties in a dutiful spirit. For this end they should have mainly in view the glory of God, the benefit of Holy Church, charity for the neighbour, the honour of their Institute, and their own supernatural merit and reward. With these ends in view in all their works, they will be instigated to perform them as perfectly as possible. Religious who are ever considering their own convenience, comfort, ease, and private satisfactions will evidently fail in this spirit of dutifulness, and they will deprive themselves of the rich heavenly reward which it merits.

Religious who are animated with a true spirit of dutifulness will not seek to shirk what duty demands of them, or to escape work, or, again, to throw labours and difficulties upon others. These religious will ever strive to overcome in themselves every evil and unbecoming or unprofitable spirit, such as a spirit of discontent, idleness, self-seeking, or indifference. All this will make them worthy members of their Institute. It will tend to sanctify their daily life, and it will preserve them from the many faults into which the slothful and negligent fall.

(*c*) In the third place, every Institute has its own

particular and distinctive rule. While conforming generally with the norms drawn up in 1901 by the then existing Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the rules of the various Institutes have yet a distinctive character, and they are not altogether conformable one with another in detail. Every Institute loves its own rule. This rule has come to it from its holy founder, and it expresses his mind and will as to the foundation and its ends, and as to the manner of life which the members of the Institute should follow. The spirit of the rule stamps upon the religious of the Institute a special character, and makes them what the holy founder desired that they should be. The rule lays down the precise manner of government to be followed in the Institute and the means to be employed by the religious to enable them to attain the perfection of their calling.

Religious are under an obligation to live according to rule; therefore are they taught in the novitiate what the holy rule demands of them. They should throughout life study its spirit and requirements; they should regard it as the rule of all and of each of the members of the Institute. Because, therefore, the rule binds all, none are exempt from obedience to its wise prescriptions. These prescriptions have their bearing, not only upon the well-being of the Institute as such, but also upon the sanctification of its individual members. The importance of the rule is seen also in this—that every Institute has its rule; none could hope to thrive, or even to exist, without it. Being of this vital importance, the rule should be maintained and observed at any cost.

But how will observance be maintained if individual members disregard the rule? Such disregard might spread, with the consequence that the rule would become practically useless. To save religious Institutes from such a catastrophe their members are placed under the strict obligation of observing their rule, and they should be devoted to this sanctifying observance.

Religious who live for themselves, and not for God and their Institute, will be found wanting in what makes a true religious, and they will not be happy in their calling. But happy, on the other hand, are religious who are impregnated with the true spirit of their holy calling. They will manifest this spirit by their zeal for the works of their Institute, and by their fidelity to its rule. They will not look abroad for their satisfaction, for they will find it within their Institute. And while striving that their Institute may be respected and honoured, they will also themselves at the same time advance from virtue to virtue, supported by the many graces which dutifulness to their calling will merit for them.

4. Attachment to one's Institute.

A religious vocation does not lead persons to religion in a general way, but to a particular kind of religious life. There are in the Church many and various religious Orders and Institutes. Their members have come to them by a particular vocation, and they should not, therefore, wander from one to another. They should remain in the Institute

to which they have been called, and they should be devoted to it and to its interests.

When persons enter into religion, the doors of the Institute are thrown open to them, and they are clothed with its peculiar habit. Thereupon there is entered into, between them and it, a kind of compact or understanding that they shall belong exclusively to the Institute, and not to any other. They are admitted into its family life as members of the family, and they undertake to observe its rules and regulations. At profession the contract is solemnly ratified. This contract has its meaning and its force; it creates a bond between religious and their own particular Institute.

This bond, to which are attached many benefits, demands on the part of religious (*a*) gratitude, (*b*) attachment to the Institute, (*c*) zeal for its interests, and (*d*) fidelity in fulfilling the engagements entered into.

(*a*) Religious, in the first place, should be grateful to their Institute for having opened its doors to them, and made them sharers in whatever it has, and in its spiritual benefits, and this sense of gratitude should be an abiding one. The father of the prodigal had also a dutiful son, and to this one he said: 'Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine' (St. Luke xv. 31). In such case as was the dutiful son are also religious in their Institute; for they are all members of the family partaking of the goods which are common to all. The Institute says to them: 'All I have is yours.' The Superiors and those who have charge of the temporal administra-

tion fulfil their offices for the benefit of all the members. There are also many spiritual advantages in every Institute: these are not for the enjoyment of only a privileged few, but they are partaken of by all the members. Nothing is kept back from the religious. Have they not, then, everything to be thankful for? In the blessings and advantages enjoyed in the Institute religious should recognize God's loving providence in their regard, and they should strive to prove themselves grateful for it. How unbecoming, then, it would be if they became malcontents and grumblers! Such as these seem to forget the many obligations they are under to their Institute; and do they not even complain of God's dispensations? These malcontents are often of the number of those who have contributed least to the temporal welfare of their community. Religious should bear in mind that God may not wish them to be always without some privation or inconvenience. The presence of some inconvenience should not close their eyes to the rich and abundant blessings they otherwise enjoy.

(*b*) Religious, in the second place, should be attached to their Institute, and they should deem it a duty to give proof of their attachment. Men and women in the world are attached to their country and to their homes, to their colleges, to their benefit societies, and to everything associated with their welfare and happiness. But, in the case of religious, what is more bound up with their contentment and well-being than their Institute? for is it not to them as a cherished home, and in

some respects as their spiritual mother? They should be devotedly and constantly attached to it. Attachment to their Institute is founded on considerations of religion, reasonableness, and self-interest, and it will lead to contentment. Their interests, as well as their happiness, are bound up with the holy ties of the religious life in their own Institute. As to other Institutes, they may respect and admire them, and they may rejoice in all the good they are doing; but they are not for them, and they are not to them what their own Institute is. There are religious whose praise and admiration are bestowed on other Institutes, and not on their own. Is such conduct loyal? is it just? Religious should respect, admire, and love their own Institute. In a large measure their happiness and religious progress depend upon their attachment to it; for this attachment makes them breathe its spirit, and causes their heart to throb with the same sentiments and impulses that actuate and guide their community and their Institute. Religious should therefore beware of associating themselves with any who decry against, and find fault with, the acts, regulations, and administration of their appointed Superiors. Malcontents who do this often misjudge and wrong their Superiors, and they do serious mischief by underrating them and causing others to share their own views. These are often religious who are not sincerely attached to their Institute.

(*c*) In the third place, as the life of religious is bound up with that of their Institute, there should be manifest in their conduct a zeal for its well-being

and interests. Every creature gifted with life instinctively seeks the preservation of its own life. Guided by reason and religion, religious should therefore desire and seek the preservation and development of the life of their Institute, seeing that their own life is so far bound up with it. The joys and sorrows of their Institute should be as their own; so that religious should lament its failures and misfortunes, and rejoice in its successes and good fortune. In these ways would they manifest the identity in life and interest existing between themselves and their Institute; and thus, too, would be seen the reality of the bond existing between them.

In a family, the members are not strangers to one another, nor do their interests clash, but all seek to maintain the family's good name. So should it be in religious Institutes. To secure and maintain their Institute's good name and progress the efforts of all its members should be directed, and religious should avoid following only selfish and private aims. All energies should be directed to labouring for the common good. Thus will religious make their Institute respected, secure the success of its works, and, as far as in them lies, help its progress and development. The Institute expects in its members this zeal for its welfare.

(*d*) Religious, in the last place, must be faithful in fulfilling the engagements they have entered into with their Institute. Their attachment to it must be lifelong. They must be true to their bond. What of religious who become weary of their

engagement, and who slacken their efforts? Is not the Tempter at work? Or are they giving way to sloth or discouragement? Let them remember that God will be faithful in rewarding, if only they are faithful in labouring. Religious should not say, It is time for me to look for repose; let others take up the work. Almighty God will dispense them from toil at the time He Himself fixes. As religious grow older in religion, they should be more dutiful, more zealous, more edifying, more patient, more spiritual, and more perfect in every way. There may yet remain defects, and these should help them to become more humble. The longer religious wear the holy habit of their Institute, the more faithfully should they exhibit in their conduct the spirit and virtues it demands of them. Having left the world, they should not associate unnecessarily with secular persons; for such association, if frequent, will tend to impregnate their character and conduct with a secular spirit, to the detriment of their religious sense and character. Having given themselves to God, let the gift be real; they should cultivate the true spirit of their vocation, and seek to advance in religious perfection.

Happy will be the life of religious who are grateful to their holy Institute, attached to it, zealous for its interests, and faithful to all their engagements. Their Institute will reciprocate their devotedness, and hold them in honour.

5. Holy Poverty—Advantages.

The burden of riches is one from which, happily, religious are relieved. To many men riches are a snare and a temptation, causing them to be engrossed with only worldly cares and attachments, to the present neglect of heavenly grace, and perhaps finally to the loss of the heavenly reward. In some men the love of riches becomes so evil a passion as to lead them to various injustices, to defraud labourers of their just hire, and to neglect the good works which are demanded of the wealthy. So St. James says: 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you' (v. 1).

Our Lord said upon an occasion to His disciples: 'Amen I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven' (St. Matt. xix. 23). He did not speak thus of the poor. 'Blessed,' He said, 'are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (*ibid.* v. 3).

All are not called, as are religious, to the practice of evangelical poverty. This call is a precious grace. It is a token of God's predilection, and of predestination. If religious would not lose this token, they should love poverty, and seek to be ever faithful in observing what religious poverty demands.

The advantages of holy poverty are seen in this: (*a*) that it leaves religious free to attend to spiritual things; (*b*) that it removes them from the danger of vanity and worldliness; (*c*) that it mortifies the

spirit as well as the body; and (*d*) that it procures 'treasure in heaven.'

(*a*) The observance of religious poverty disengages the mind from undue care about all worldly possessions, and the heart from attachment to them. Men who are eager for wealth, who are avaricious, and whose whole thought is for their worldly possessions and concerns, become subject to an unworthy passion, which fetters their soul, and prevents it from appreciating and seeking spiritual blessings. This passion ties their soul to earth, to material goods, to commerce, to worldly riches; so that these men think, plan, speak, and act, as if nothing else was worthy of their desires, aims, and efforts. As a consequence of this inordinate attention to worldly concerns, prayer and other duties of religion which would lift up their soul to God, and prepare it for its heavenly destiny, are neglected. How, then, shall it be with such rich men when they leave this world for ever? Holy Job says: 'The rich man when he shall sleep shall take away nothing with him: he shall open his eyes and find nothing' (xxvii. 19). Therefore does the holy writer say: 'O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!' (Ecclus. xli. 1). Care, planning, worry, disappointment, anxiety, excitement, and coveting, are the portion of many rich men; and these things so engross them that they neglect spiritual things, and fail to seek first the kingdom of God (St. Matt. vi. 33), and to labour the more by good works to make sure their calling and election (2 St. Pet. i. 10). But religious,

spurning the riches of the world, and leaving themselves in God's hands, are free to turn their minds and hearts to the things that please God, and their aim is to tend ever to perfection in the holy path of their vocation. They should, therefore, be happy in pursuing a path that is both holy and wise, and should be zealous for the better gifts (1 Cor. xii. 31, xiv. 1).

(*b*) In the second place, the observance of religious poverty removes religious from the danger of vanity and worldliness. Riches may always be turned to good account; but when they are to their possessors the occasion of a spirit of vanity and worldliness, they are a source of evil. Often the wealthy are not eager to walk in Christian humility and simplicity; for, unhappily and unwisely, they seek display: they must shine in society and surpass others; they must lead fashion and have a first place at public functions, and they wish that others should look up to them. All this tends to worldliness, and feeds pride. It cannot be said that it wins for the wealthy sincere esteem and friendship, for it often excites in others envy and jealousy. Nor can it be said that it brings them real joy; for a vain and worldly spirit disturbs the soul, and deprives it of the blessings of contentment and peace.

How different is the case of religious! They are removed from the sphere of vanity and fashion, of strife for superiority, and of eagerness for worldly distinction. They profess poverty, they love simplicity, they are dependent upon others for their daily needs, and they have no riches of which to

boast or make display. They are not of the number of those 'that trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches' (Ps. xlviii. 7). The Holy Scriptures tell us of such as these who, when they shall have fallen away and been lost, will all too late lament their folly, saying: 'What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow' (Wisd. v. 8, 9). The dangers of this kind encountered on the sea of the world are not for those who profess poverty. It is written: 'Let them that sail on the sea, tell the dangers thereof' (Ecclus. xliii. 26). The dangers associated with riches are many, but religious are saved from them.

(*c*) In the third place, the observance of religious poverty mortifies the spirit as well as the body. The Holy Scriptures insist upon the necessity of discipline. The soul, the whole man, must submit to, and be ruled by, a wise and salutary discipline. Poverty in the matter of clothing, diet, lodging, and ordinary conveniences, is a discipline. It may rightly be regarded as one of the most salutary means of mortification, restraint, and correction for the body. When men are rich, there is a temptation to pamper the body. They are perhaps inclined to imitate the rich man of whom our Lord spoke, 'who was clothed in purple and fine linen: and feasted sumptuously every day' (St. Luke xvi. 19). Religious who profess holy poverty bear in their bodies the mortification of Jesus, that, as St. Paul says, the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in

their bodies (2 Cor. iv. 10). We should bear in mind that the spirit is in many ways reached through the flesh: the disciplining of the one tells beneficially upon the other. If, then, poverty mortifies the body, it will also mortify the spirit, and render it humbler and more docile, meeker and more patient. A humble spirit should be found under a poor exterior. The discipline of holy poverty is precious and indispensable in all who embrace the religious state.

(*d*) Lastly, the profession of religious poverty, accompanied by fidelity in observing its prescriptions, procures for religious 'treasure in heaven.' Our Lord Himself promises them this reward if only they are true to their calling; for he said to the young man who had great possessions, and who had kept the commandments from his youth: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven' (St. Matt. xix. 21). How happy and profitable is the exchange which religious make! They renounce a little that they may obtain much; they part with their temporal riches that they may obtain others that are everlasting; they give up earthly possessions that they may receive a heavenly inheritance; they shall have 'treasure in heaven.'

Thanking God for having called them to embrace a state of religious poverty, religious should lift up their heart to things spiritual and eternal. In the necessary use of temporal blessings they should purify their intentions, and avoid being attached unduly to them. The practice of evangelical poverty

may demand of religious some small privations, but these they should suffer even with a willing mind, and sacrifice on the altar of holy poverty. They may be sure that the more perfectly they practise poverty, the richer they will be in heavenly grace, and that thus will they lay by for themselves a greater reward.

6. Holy Poverty—Observance.

Besides the advantages already treated of which religious should derive from the practice of evangelical poverty, there are also others. For instance, it prevents differences and distinctions between religious in matters of diet, clothing, furniture, property, and many comforts of life; and it also prevents misunderstandings which might otherwise arise about such matters. Now, provision concerning these things is regulated by the vow of holy poverty. In every Institute there are in detail particular prescriptions concerning the manner of observing poverty; but in most Institutes in which the members are under simple vows there is a general similarity in what is laid down.

The subjects of this chapter are (*a*) to point out briefly what the vow of poverty demands; and (*b*) to show how the spirit of poverty helps to insure compliance with its demands, and to render the observance easy. We pass by the consideration of the special obligations undertaken by religious under solemn vows, who are ordinarily rendered incapable individually of acquiring or retaining ownership of property.

(*a*) Religious under simple vows enjoy the right of retaining ownership, and therefore of willing their property; but the revenue coming from it must be employed in accordance with what is laid down by Canon Law and by the rules and constitutions of their Institute, with the approbation of their Superiors.

Before any vows are taken, and while those who are to take them have full use of their liberty, it is recommended that they should at that time make their will. That a will may lawfully be made by professed religious, except in cases of urgency, the sanction of the Holy See is required. When there is real urgency, it will suffice to obtain the permission of the Superior-General, or, if this cannot be done, of the local Superior.

Religious may not themselves administer either their property or its revenues. All arrangements concerning such administration should be made before any religious vows are taken. In any case, religious individually are not allowed to benefit by the revenue derived from their property, but they must lead the common life of the community. Religious who have made their vows for life may not licitly give away or sell their property without the sanction of the Holy See.

We now pass on to consider what the vow demands in the use of things, for in this the practice of holy poverty chiefly consists. The rule of every Institute provides for the necessities of its members; while forbidding useless superfluities, it also permits certain comforts in the community life. Everything should, however, be in keeping with holy poverty.

The rule provides in due measure for what is useful, as well as for what is strictly necessary; but in using or disposing of things religious depend upon and require the sanction of the rule or of the Superiors.

It may, then, be laid down as a general rule that religious may not keep, use, receive, borrow, give, or lend any articles or money, or incur debts, or spend money, without the permission of their Superior. This permission should ordinarily be, directly or virtually, express. Permission which is virtually express means permission originally given and still in force. At times even tacit permission will suffice, as such permission is deemed to imply sanction. There are cases in which silence gives consent. Sometimes, also, when express permission cannot be obtained, but would certainly be given, or, again, when the Superior's mind may rightly be interpreted as giving sanction, religious may act upon presumed permission. They must not, however, pretend to presume permission, when their conscience tells them that certainly, or even very probably, permission would not be given.

The vow of poverty, moreover, requires that due care should be employed in the use of things, so as to provide against waste, injury, or loss. Things should be used for the purpose for which they are destined or granted. Money should not be expended for other purposes than for those for which it has been given or for which permission has been granted.

Finally, and in a word, religious should not act with proprietary powers, but in a manner truly subject to the authority of their Superiors. They

should not, therefore, keep, use, or dispose of anything as though it were absolutely their own, but always with dependence upon their Superiors.

(*b*) It is most important that religious should be imbued with the spirit of poverty. Happy are those who cultivate this spirit and who practise detachment from the good things of life! Such as these will readily deny themselves in many ways, while others who have not this spirit will ever seek their own comfort, and in order to satisfy their cravings to have things will often demand exemptions, dispensations, or unnecessary permissions. These others, it may be feared, will even fail in the due observance of their vow of poverty.

What are we to understand by this spirit of poverty? It is one of detachment from worldly goods and comforts; it leads religious to be content with little, to be patient under privations, and even to suffer loss without inordinate disturbance of mind. Religious imbued with this spirit will not cultivate expensive habits, nor will they put their community to unnecessary expense; they will not be exacting in matters of diet or clothing, and they will not be wasteful; their observance of holy poverty will be of a real and practical kind, and their spirit of detachment and self-denial will bring its own reward. The world will have but little hold upon them. It will easily be seen that in other ways, too, they have the true religious spirit. Such religious will advance in humility, which is a sister virtue to poverty, and they will be distinguished for their love of chastity and piety. Their mind and heart will happily be

free from every baneful spirit of covetousness, and will be less liable on that account to be disturbed by worry or anxiety about earthly things. Faithful in keeping their vow, they will be acceptable to our Lord, Whose wise counsels they seek to follow, Who, being rich, became poor for their sake.

Religious should put this Divine Model of the practice of poverty before them to inspire them with a right understanding of what holy poverty demands of them, and with a sincere love of their vow and desire to fulfil its obligations. Let them also take inspiration from the love and practice of poverty witnessed in Mary and Joseph. What good company they will be in if they are truly poor! Religious should also, with eyes of faith, look to the future reward. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Their fidelity to holy poverty in love and practice will secure for them 'treasure in heaven.'

7. Holy Chastity.

An indispensable condition of the religious life is the taking and keeping of the vow of holy chastity. This vow prepares religious in an especial manner for their consecration to Jesus Christ. Poverty takes off their affections from material possessions and comforts; obedience subjects their will under holy and sanctifying conditions; chastity lifts them up above all carnal pleasures by a holy consecration of themselves to Christ. Great servants of God have made this vow of holy chastity. Moved by the

noblest motives, they have bound themselves to lead a chaste life. This was their vocation. The married state is one blessed by God. It is a state common to most persons in the world, whereas the state of virginity is a special state. Let all follow their vocation. St. Paul says: 'Every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that' (1 Cor. vii. 7). But the Apostle declares the state of virginity to be the more excellent one, and he says: 'He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. . . . And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in spirit' (1 Cor. vii. 32, 34).

We will examine (*a*) what obligations religious take upon themselves by the vow of chastity, and (*b*) what steps they should take with a view to observing their vow faithfully.

(*a*) Religious vowed to chastity undertake not to enter into the married state, and to lead a chaste life; that is, to abstain from every act opposed to chastity.*

Before taking upon themselves the obligations attached to the vow of holy chastity, religious are allowed ample time to weigh these obligations. They know that there is open to them, and to their free choice, another state of life—namely, the married

* See 'Norms,' chap. xi., where the obligation is thus defined: 'Per votum castitatis soror professionem emittens se adstringit ad servandum coelibatum, et insuper novo titulo, id est ipsius voti, ad abstinendum a quocumque actu castitati opposito.'

state. Drawn, however, by Divine grace, they feel called to the holy state of virginity; and they desire most earnestly to protect their purity by a solemn engagement which will close against them that other state. Led, then, by the grace of their privileged calling, they make a wise and holy choice, and they do not afterwards regret having made it. Consecrated by the vow of chastity to Christ, they throw themselves in an especial way upon His love, care, and protection. The married indeed claim conjugal love and attention from their chosen partners in life; but religious are content to seek a holy comfort, not from any creature, but from God. Our Lord will not deny them the love, care, and solace which will afford them a sense of holy joy and security. Was not this the happy experience of St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Clare, St. Teresa, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, and numberless other great Saints who vowed their virginity to God? Did any of them ever pine after the comfort of human ties and affections? In imitation, then, of so many saintly predecessors in the religious life, religious should lift up their thoughts and affections with loving trust and fidelity to Jesus Christ, as to One Who has espoused them to Himself, and Whose grace will cherish and protect them.

In fulfilment of the vow, there must be in the exterior conduct of religious a strict abstention from everything contrary to holy chastity. That they may be faithful in this abstention, there should be a careful guard over the senses, and a prudent avoidance of everything irregular or indiscreet. Religious

should not, however, be discouraged if sometimes they become painfully aware that the enemy is lurking around the walls, or even that he seems at close quarters. While they are not freed from the bonds of the flesh, temptation may spring suddenly upon them, and surprise them all unawares. Should this disconcert them, when they reflect that every virtue must be tested? It is in the time of trial and temptation that religious are to give evidence that they are humble, patient, and obedient, or not. So, too, must there be temptations to prove if they are chaste or not. But let the hour of temptation be to them the hour of faithfulness to the holy virtue, the hour of courage and of strenuous resistance: then will it be to them the hour of a glorious victory. The unwary, the curious, the indiscreet, the self-indulgent, are to be pitied. They do not carry all their armour, and the enemy may discover their weak points. In this dangerous contest there must not be any slackening of vigilance, any weakening of good purpose, or any faint-heartedness in offering resistance while the conflict rages. While religious remove themselves from all known dangers and snares, they will, at the same time, fortify themselves by recourse to prayer, and by fervent protestations of attachment to the holy virtue.

In order that religious may be faithful to their vow of chastity, they should observe most exactly the precautions insisted upon by their holy rule. But, further, they cannot be too careful in banishing all thoughts, affections, and desires opposed to the holy virtue, which might lead to a complacency

prejudicial to chastity itself, and therefore opposed to the vow. When, therefore, their conscience is alarmed, when their mind is uneasy, when their sensitive heart seems disturbed, they would do well to ask themselves, 'Is it right to entertain this thought or this affection?'—for there are indications of danger being at hand.

(*b*) We have yet to examine what steps religious should take in order to observe their vow faithfully. Besides the guardedness just counselled, other precautions and means should be employed.

1. There must be a sincere love of the holy virtue, and of all that conduces to foster it, particularly of piety. Esteem for chastity was not unknown even among pagan peoples. It should be found in the highest degree in persons consecrated to God. We have read of saintly virgins who preferred death to the loss of their chastity.

2. There must be a discreet avoidance of danger. The pure white robe may easily be sullied. Indiscretion should be studiously avoided. A modest reserve, so becoming in religious of both sexes, should be as a shield against undue notice and unwise affection, and as a restraint against imprudence in the display of friendship or natural gaiety of disposition.

3. When danger is met with, immediate resistance must be employed, or escape and flight must be resorted to. What should be counselled? The needed advice may be summed up in these words: Banish the dangerous thought; turn away the eyes; close the ears; go from the danger.

4. There must be true spiritual life—piety and prayer. Powerful aids to foster chastity are the frequentation of the holy sacraments, love of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, devotion to His Passion and to His Sacred Heart, a tender love of Mary, and devotion to St. Joseph and to St. Aloysius.

The chaste lives of God's servants in religion are one of the brightest ornaments of the Church. Religious faithful to chastity win for themselves and for the Church a holy esteem. Bright will be their crown when, transferred to the heavenly kingdom, they shall follow the spotless Divine Lamb, singing the new canticle, in union and unison with the Virgin Spouses of the Lamb.

8. Holy Obedience—Motives.

Among the virtues demanded by the religious life, obedience should be placed in the first rank. There would not be true and sanctifying religious life without rule and discipline, and these things could not have any lasting existence without compliance and submission. The necessity of obedience should therefore be universally recognized. It should be recognized by Superiors, who should not countenance breaches of obedience; and by all subjects, who should readily accustom themselves to the practice of this virtue. Let us consider three things which should move subjects to the faithful practice of obedience.

(*a*) The motive of obedience which should hold the first place is that of submission for Christ's

sake. It leads religious to render obedience to their rule and to their Superiors even as to our Lord Himself, and it has the merit belonging to submission to Him.

(*b*) Another motive of obedience is founded on the excellence of the virtue of obedience.

(*c*) The third motive proceeds from the love which religious should have for their Institute, and for good order and regularity.

(*a*) Obedience is lifted up, sanctified, and rendered specially meritorious, when religious obey for the love of our Lord. When this is their motive, they render obedience to religious authority, not as to such and such persons, considered in themselves, but even as to our Lord, Whom their superiors represent.

Religious recognize that their vocation is from God, and that it is therefore God Who calls them to bind themselves to practise obedience, this practice being one of the essential duties of the religious state. They propose to themselves to be obedient always, because, upon God's demand, they have vowed obedience for life. Since their vow binds them to the constant practice of obedience, it renders them specially pleasing to God, and it sanctifies everything they do under obedience. For, as their vow has been made to God, it gives every act of obedience the stamp of something done for Him.

There could not be a higher motive than to obey for God's sake. Persons who are not consecrated to God, but who are in other states of life, may

practise obedience from the same motive—and they should do so (Eph. vi. 5, 6); but religious, as we have seen, place themselves under the strictest obligation of doing this, and of always doing it. Moreover, in the commands given by their religious Superiors, they recognize the commands of Jesus Christ, their only Lord and Master; for they recognize that He commands through their Superiors. When, therefore, they receive any lawful command they may say: Our Lord wishes me to do this; I will do it because it is His will that I should do it.

How beneficial, then, this first motive of obedience should be! Should it not prompt obedience of the readiest and most perfect kind? Should it not inspire religious with a spirit of self-sacrifice and devotedness in obeying?

(*b*) The second motive is founded on the excellence of religious obedience. This virtue demands a most perfect submission of the will.

When we offer a gift, its value is reckoned by its richness or amplitude; and when we make some sacrifice, it is esteemed according to its cost to us. If we apply the same tests to religious obedience, how excellent and how estimable a virtue it should appear! By their vow of obedience religious offer to God once and for all the gift of their will—and what is so precious or so prized? And they embrace in the matter of their obedience everything that their rules or their Superiors may lawfully at any time demand of them. How rich, then, and how ample should be deemed their gift!

By their vow, too, religious make a sacrifice—and

how much it involves! When obeying, they have often and in many ways to go against their own natural inclinations—perhaps in what has to be done, or in the manner and time of doing it. Obedience often demands the sacrifice of their convenience, leisure, and repose. It may also require them to submit to others, to permit others to be placed before themselves, to wait upon others, or to do the work of others. As these things may be trying to nature, and hard of accomplishment, it is seen that the sacrifice which religious make when they vow obedience is not without its cost. Grace, however, enables them to make the sacrifice, and to surmount all difficulties.

Unhappily, there are religious who seem unwilling to make the full sacrifice which obedience demands. These are the imperfect religious who do not appreciate the excellence of obedience. They seem to be satisfied only when they are acting independently of their Superiors. They find it irksome to be always under the control of another's will, and they wish to have always their own way.

We are considering the excellence of religious obedience. It is further seen in the exercise it demands of other virtues; for it involves the practice of humility, self-denial, patience, meekness, equanimity, and charity. This being so, obedience may not itself be reckoned a virtue of only the second order: it must necessarily stand in the foremost rank of virtues. The excellence of this virtue is also seen in this, that it shines out so conspicuously in our Lord, in His whole life and mission. He

came to do the will of His heavenly Father, and during long years He was subject to Mary and Joseph. St. Paul says: 'He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death: even to the death of the cross' (Phil. ii. 8). Appreciation, then, of the excellence of the virtue of obedience should prompt religious to practise it as faithfully as possible.

(*c*) In the third place, religious should be prompted in their obedience, through a sincere love of their Institute and of good order and regularity.

Obedience insures in religious Institutes the accomplishment of the ends for which they exist. Superiors should be able to count upon the submission and loyal support of their subjects in carrying out the works entrusted to the community. But if subjects were not bound to obey, if they were to be permitted to follow their own plans and whims, or if they could select their own office and employment, then the Institute would not be able to hold together. It would fail in its works, and fall into disrepute, and sooner or later it would cease to be. In Institutes where obedience is loved and practised such sad results are not met with. These Institutes thrive, and they are held in esteem.

Again, in view of the perfection to which religious, individually and collectively, are bound to tend, there must be in every Institute religious observance and manner of life. Good order and regularity are essential to observance, and these cannot be where obedience is wanting.

In every country there must be obedience to its laws, in every army obedience to commands, and in

every family obedience to parental government and arrangements, otherwise there will be confusion, disorder, disunion, and strife. It will not be otherwise in religion if obedience is disregarded. Religious should therefore be prompted to obedience by the motive of devotedness to their Institute and to religious dutifulness. They did not embrace the religious state therein to live in a disorderly manner, but to labour therein for their sanctification. The more perfectly they practise obedience, the more surely will they attain the object they had in view; and this object they should always keep in view.

The motives that have been suggested to prompt religious to be obedient should insure the practice of obedience, and they will sanctify it. There should be a practical appreciation of this essential religious virtue. When it is not loved, the practice of it will be faulty. Sanctifying motives will lift up the character of obedience, and tend to make its practice prompt, easy, and meritorious.

9. Holy Obedience—Qualities.

Obedience falls under the vow when it is formally imposed—that is, when it is imposed in such a way that the Superior makes it clear to the subject that compliance is required in virtue of the vow taken. This would evidently be the case if the Superior were to say, 'I require you to do this in virtue of your vow of obedience,' or, 'I command you in the name of our Lord to do this.'

Religious, however, are not exempt from the

obligation of obeying, even when obedience is not thus formally imposed. That their obedience may be meritorious, it should in every case be that sanctifying religious obedience which the rule of their Institute prescribes or expects. They may sin against the virtue of obedience as well as against the vow. If, when viewing prospectively what may be demanded of them, religious say: 'I will not do it; I will not accept such a charge or duty; I will not go to such a place,' they thereby show that they do not rightly understand the first principles of religious obedience. They are not prepared to place themselves at the disposal of their Superiors, as God wills they should. They manifest that they wish to do their own will, and their words belie their self-renunciation and their promise: 'I vow obedience.'

We come now to examine what should be the qualities of religious obedience. We will see that it should be (*a*) prompt, (*b*) simple, and (*c*) hearty.

(*a*) In the first place, religious are required to obey promptly. There should be promptitude in the matter both of the time and manner of executing what obedience imposes. The obedience given specifies explicitly or implicitly the time for doing what is demanded. If not otherwise specified, the order implies that it should be carried out immediately. In this case there should not be any delay or any staying to argue, once the matter to be done is clearly understood; nor should religious select their own time for complying with what is required. To do so would be to follow their own, and not the Superior's, will in the matter of time, and thus, and

so far, to offend against obedience. Consideration should also be given to the fact that delay might cause inconvenience or annoyance.

If anything is ordered to be done at some future time, then, when the prescribed time arrives, religious should do it. Again, if anything has to be done under certain circumstances, then, when these occur, religious must comply with the obedience imposed. In order to obey promptly, religious must be ready to disarrange their own plans, and to interrupt what occupies them at the time. The sound of the bell should be regarded as the voice of our Lord calling religious to some duty, and it should be obeyed promptly.

As to the manner of obeying, there should be promptness in action; there should not be procrastination in executing the order, nor slowness in performing what has to be done. Assiduity is a token of an obedient spirit. Duties should not be accomplished in a slovenly way or with unnecessary interruptions.

A notable example of promptitude in obedience is that of St. Joseph going into Egypt. The angel appeared to him during the night, and said to him: 'Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt' (St. Matt. ii. 14). Joseph obeyed at once, and escaped from Bethlehem while it was yet night. He did not stay to discuss the difficulties of doing what was required, nor did he pretend to examine what would be the most convenient time for executing the order. All he attended to was to carry out promptly and exactly the Divine command.

(*b*) In the second place, religious should obey simply. They should not, therefore, create difficulties about executing any command given them; they should not make a fuss about accepting it or about fulfilling it; they should accept it humbly and cheerfully, and then carry out what is commanded without ostentation and without wishing to be made much of. They must not seek their own glory or praise for what they do, but leave all commendation to God, from Whom alone they should expect their reward.

Good religious will not think that they know better than their Superiors what ought to be done or how it should be done; they will rather receive the directions and commands of their Superiors as coming from our Lord, and they will submit their judgment as well as their will in carrying out the arrangements of their Superiors. They will not consider that it belongs to them to judge why their Superiors do not order things otherwise than they do.

It is evident that serious obstacles to simplicity in obedience are self-opinionatedness and self-will.

Simplicity in obedience leads religious to obey in what is lawful without regard to the nature of what is commanded, and to overcome all human respect. They will therefore carry out what may be humiliating, and fulfil lowly offices, just as they will also place themselves in the hands of their Superiors when appointed to higher offices or when required to do what will bring them praise or distinction. Simplicity in obedience, therefore, leads religious to hold themselves indifferent as to their employment,

whether it be honourable in its kind or otherwise. St. Paul says: 'In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some indeed unto honour, but some unto dishonour' (2 Tim. ii. 20). Is it not the same in religion? All the offices and employments are not equally honourable; and therefore, actuated by simplicity in obedience, religious must be prepared to fulfil those that are less honourable, and to take up or to lay down any charge. It is not for religious to select their employment, but to do what is ordered.

(*c*) In the third place, religious should obey heartily—that is, they should not act under constraint or compulsion, but with a compliance that is willing and from the heart. Have they not, in entering religion and in vowing obedience, made an act of renouncement and given up their individual likings and seeking? Should they not, therefore, enter cheerfully and fully into the performance of what the Superiors and the rule require of them? This may not always be easy, but the more perfectly they do it the more acceptable to God will be their obedience. In this especially do we see how obedience is a kind of sacrifice. Religious should so act as not to make it a painful or disagreeable duty for the Superiors to require them to do anything. There are unhappily religious who seem satisfied with themselves when they have done their own will and acted without authorization, provided that they have succeeded in this without the Superior knowing of it. Such conduct merits to be classed under disobedi-

ence. It is the conduct of religious who submit themselves to their Superiors only when it suits themselves to do so. We might ask how such religious can pretend to tend to perfection by the practice of obedience. Such religious do not obey heartily.

To obey heartily, religious must overcome natural repugnances, self-seeking, discontent, murmuring, and all opposition of their will. In order to be able to do this, God's help must be sought in prayer. Hearty obedience will, however, be its own reward, for it brings the will of religious into accord with that of the Superiors; it gives the Superiors pleasure, and inspires them with confidence in their subjects; moreover, it results in peace of mind to the religious themselves.

Religious should, then, strive that their obedience may be prompt, simple, and hearty. Such obedience will edify others, and foster this excellent virtue in the community. Religious should put away far from themselves the independent spirit, for it is destructive of good order and discipline, and of obedience, peace, and charity. They should likewise put away all obstinacy, dilatoriness, and murmuring. Satan's efforts will be directed to destroy obedience. He succeeded in this when he tempted our first parents. Rebellion and disobedience are fatal to religiousness. Happy are religious who strive to imitate the obedience of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Obedience sanctifies their will and gives exceeding merit to their actions.

10. The Holy Rule.

Religious are under the obligation of tending to perfection by the observance of the rules of their Institute. Some, unhappily, who systematically fail to fulfil what the rule demands, would seem not to realize the nature of this obligation.

The members of every religious Institute should be animated with its spirit, occupied with its works, and directed by its rule. What should be said of the holy rule? It should be recognized as a rule for every day and for the whole life of every member of the Institute. And it should be studied and loved (*a*) because it contains the wise direction by which the holy founder would lead his children in the path of perfection; and (*b*) because its observance provides for the stability of the Institute. After the consideration of these two reasons for observance of rule, (*c*) some faults to be avoided will be noted.

(*a*) In the first place, the holy rule should be regarded with special respect as containing the founder's wise counsels to his children, and his regulations for their spiritual and temporal welfare.

Religious are called to aim at the perfection belonging to their state as members of their own particular Institute. What other Institutes may propose to their members is not their affair. It is the duty of all religious to seek in their own rule the means of perfection of which their holy founder wished them to avail themselves. The character and requirements of the rule make it clear to them that theirs is not to be a worldly or selfish life, but a

religious life. By the provisions of the rule, which insists upon a particular training and various religious observances, they are to be moulded to this kind of life. Their rule is of so great an importance to them that, if they fail to observe it, they will not attain the perfection which the holy founder proposed to his followers.

The importance of observance of rule is seen also in this, that it has its bearing upon the dutiful accomplishment of the works proper to an Institute. The members of a religious Institute are not to lead an idle life : they are required so to engage in carrying on its works as to bring God's blessing on themselves and on the Institute. This will be the happy result of living in the faithful observance of rule, and of acting in the spirit of devotedness inculcated by the rule.

Besides wishing to provide for the sanctification of his spiritual children and for the success of the works of the Institute, the founder in the holy rules insists upon the maintenance of union and peace in the various communities, the practice of the queenly virtue of charity, and the giving of mutual edification. How necessary all this is to the preservation of the family life and the religious bond in the Institute! Of what benefit would it be to receive commendation from externs if the interior life of the Institute were rendered miserable by disunion and disedification? Religious are not solitaries, but, all having the same ends in view, they live under a common rule, which therefore should be faithfully observed by all. They owe one another consideration, and they should

render mutual help, and edify one another by piety, charity, and observance.

(*b*) In the second place, religious should be devoted to their holy rule, because the well-being and stability of their Institute depend upon its faithful observance. If a kingdom would be maintained, it must have its laws, and they must be obeyed. So is it with religious Institutes. Every Institute must have its rule, and the rule must be obeyed, otherwise the Institute will make little or no progress, and it may fall into disrepute.

This will be better understood when the character and ends of a religious rule are examined. A rule is a law of holy discipline, breathing the true spirit of Christian perfection, and regulating for all in common the manner of life which must be followed by the members of the Institute, and its requirements are eminently adapted to the various ends proposed by the Institute. Under constituted authority the rule binds all the members to community life, and it points out the kinds of works to which all shall devote themselves. When the rule is disregarded, the binding force needed in the Institute will be wanting, and stability will receive a rude shock.

If, then, religious would give practical proof of their devotedness to the interests of their Institute, let them love and observe their rule. Loyal observance will be fruitful in piety, good work, order, and peace, and therefore in the stability of their Institute. The Institute will be respected and esteemed by externs, and it will receive vocations. Moreover,

within it there will be contentment and mutual edification.

(*c*) Let us now proceed to consider some faults which should be avoided, which are opposed to dutifulness to the rule. We will note only two —namely, disrespectful criticism and disregard of rule.

Religious should accept the rule as it is. It has been carefully examined by the proper authority, and it has been approved. Religious should not criticize the provisions of their holy rule, for criticism tends to diminish respect. If it were permitted, what scope would it not give itself! Would even the vows escape its arrows? The respect due to the sanctity of the rule forbids its being criticized. It is not for individual members of an Institute to alter the rule, but to obey it as it is. Perhaps no rule is so perfect in every respect as not to admit at times of some modification; but the rule as it is remains in force until its change shall have been duly authorized. If, in the course of time and owing to altered conditions and circumstances, some of its enactments should require to be modified, the necessary proceedings will be adopted for the purpose by those in authority.

Another fault is disregard of rule. The rule might as well have no existence if it be disregarded. It is not intended to be merely a printed code: its existence must be a living one—namely, in the manner of life of those subject to it. Occasional faults, however, do not constitute a disregard of rule. What is understood by disregard of rule is

conduct which shows contempt of rule, or which consists in persistent breaches of rule. Such conduct would interfere with good order: it would cause disedification, and there would result from it some amount of spiritual loss to the religious who would be guilty of it. Conduct involving contempt of rule is sinful.

Religious who bear in mind that they have voluntarily taken upon themselves the obligation of keeping the rule recognize that a sense of honour demands that they should employ due diligence in observing it. This does not suppose a scrupulous observance, but a reasonable compliance—a compliance, however, which does not confine itself to only the graver points of the rule. Persistent disregard even of minor observances introduces laxity, and tends to lessen the true religious spirit.

Religious would do well to remind themselves from time to time of the relation existing between observance of rule and their obligation of tending to perfection. In order to avoid carelessness in complying with the requirements of the rule, they would also do well to regard it as signifying to them the Divine will. When, for instance, the rule requires them to be present at various exercises, to make spiritual reading, to visit the Blessed Sacrament, to ask permission from the Superior, to practise silence, and to perform certain duties, let it be to them as the voice of God, and they will see reason to comply readily with these requirements. Their ready compliance will give practical proof of their desire to please God.

Their devotedness to observance of rule will also give evidence of their love of their vocation, and of their earnestness in striving for their own spiritual welfare and advancement. Religious should be happy, seeing that the constant demands of the rule afford them so many opportunities of practising virtue and of acquiring supernatural merit. Truly observant religious are ever tendering to their Divine Master tokens of their love, and ever adding to the lustre of their heavenly crown.

II. Manner of observing the Rule.

The holy rule of every Institute is its bond, and a law of discipline indispensable to its well-being. Its faithful observance is fruitful in piety, good work, and peace. How desirable, then, is observance of rule! To all religious, however, the rule is not a yoke that is sweet, and a burden that is light. When, unhappily, this is the case, there is something wrong—not, indeed, with the rule, but with the individuals who find the yoke disagreeable. It is sad to see religious dissatisfied and unhappy. They will be so if they do not love the rule, and observe it.

Let us consider in what manner religious should observe their rule, that their observance may be fruitful in the ways we have said. We will see (*a*) what should be their interior regard for their rule, and (*b*) what should be the character of their exterior observance of it.

(*a*) Religious should regard their rule with affection. It is to be their holy guide, not for certain times and

circumstances only, but for their whole life. They should therefore consider themselves as wedded to the rule. It has become their rule; its observance is to sanctify their life, even as it has sanctified the lives of many holy religious who have gone to their reward. They must never desire a divorce from it, but they should rather wish that their manner of life may be ever more and more conformable in spirit, effort, and observance, with what it enjoins. Love of rule is a first condition to its faithful observance.

When religious love their rule, not only will they be anxious to observe it themselves, but they will also desire that all should respect it and obey it, for love of rule will inspire zeal for its universal observance. This zeal, however, should not lead religious to officiousness in pointing out the faults of others. It should show itself in three ways: first, by the sustained fidelity of these religious themselves in keeping the rule; secondly, by a kind, discreet inducement exercised with others to encourage them to be observant; and thirdly, when necessary, by judiciously reporting to those in authority any persistent or flagrant faults against the rule.

A spirit of piety ought also to enter into observance of rule, for the rule is a holy code imposed upon religious by their Institute, with the sanction of the Church. To the members of the Institute it is a law of holy discipline having for object to bring them to the perfection demanded by their calling. The sanctity of the rule should therefore inspire reverence for it; moreover, religious regard the rule as the expression to themselves of the will of our Lord.

Viewing it in this light, their sense of piety should lead them to consider fidelity to rule even as fidelity to our Lord Himself. They will seek, then, by their daily observance of all the prescriptions of their rule, to give daily evidence of their love of Him.

There should also be a due appreciation of the rule on account of what it is in itself, and on account also of the benefits resulting from a faithful observance of it. Observance of rule is a valuable help to spiritual progress and to the formation of the religious character. It may, then, be easily surmised in what way religious will suffer loss when they persistently disregard observance. Is it not seen that religious who are guilty of this disregard are usually more mundane, indiscreet, independent, and self-willed, than others, who duly appreciate the salutary prescriptions of the rule, and strive dutifully to comply with them? When will religious who make little of their rule recognize how beneficial to religious life is a holy discipline? When will they acknowledge the folly of their ways in disregarding the useful and wise prescriptions of their rule, and the many faults, and perhaps false steps, which result from their unfaithfulness? The holy discipline of the rule is a protection to religious who wisely submit themselves to it.

Another desirable disposition in the observance of rule is gladness of heart, a disposition which follows from a right appreciation of the rule, and from the spirit of piety with which religious seek to please our Lord by its observance. Religious should experience this gladness of heart because of the security

afforded by the rule when duly observed, because they have its guidance to keep their steps in the right way, and to prescribe for themselves so many means of sanctification. They should be glad of heart, because observance of rule affords them so many opportunities of practising obedience, self-denial, and other virtues; moreover, by their gladness of heart in keeping the rule, they curb and correct their own natural waywardness, and they render observance more easy.

(*b*) If religious are animated with these interior dispositions, exterior observance will be in keeping with them; there will be faithfulness, exactitude, and generosity.

Even as though the question was ever being put to them, What does the rule require of me? religious who regard their obligations in the right light will instinctively study at all times to conform themselves faithfully with what there rule demands of them. They will be as soldiers under its holy discipline. In their observance there will be constancy. They will comply with the prescriptions of the rule not only when the Superior is present, but also when no one is near and when no one sees. Human respect will not be their guiding motive; nor will they be actuated by the thought that, if they should fail to keep the rule, someone might report their conduct. Their fidelity to rule will be of a supernatural character.

In the second place, in doing what is prescribed, there will be exactitude both as to the time and as to the manner of doing it. Observant religious will

not seek to have their own way or time in complying with what is laid down, as those do who study only their own whims and convenience. They will therefore be prompt in attending the various exercises, and they will consider it a duty so to arrange their time and occupations as not to omit what is prescribed by the rule. Want of exactitude arises often from mismanagement of time or from the absence of a spirit of diligence in meeting the obligations imposed by the rule. Exactitude in observance must not, however, proceed from a spirit of ostentation or from a desire of commendation, but from devotedness to the rule actuated by a spirit of faith. Devout religious will represent to themselves our Lord at Nazareth, subject to Mary and Joseph, and exact in complying with all the arrangements existing in that humble household. If every religious house were modelled after that of Nazareth, and if all religious only took a right and supernatural view of the obligation of keeping the rule, how edifying in order and regularity every community would be!

In the third place, exterior observance of rule should be generous and cheerful. It should therefore, if truly generous in character, be extended to a ready compliance with all that is laid down, and it should be maintained all day long. The rule is not a law for only certain hours of the day, or for one place and not for another; it regulates what is done both within the religious house and out of it, and it holds good morning, noon, and night. It is the rule of life for the religious themselves, a constant guide during their lifetime; therefore, even when religious

are not wearing their habit, the rule must still be their guide, and they must still maintain their religious character by their conduct, conversation, and acts.

There should not be either hesitation or murmuring about compliance with what the rule enjoins. A cheerful compliance will afford the highest satisfaction to the religious themselves and to their superiors, and it will edify the other members of the community.

When obedience to rule is sanctified by becoming interior dispositions, and by faithful exterior compliance, it will help religious to advance in perfection, and it will be a good preparation for Holy Mass and daily Holy Communion. Such obedience, which will be both meritorious and edifying, is what is demanded and expected.

When religious are not happy in their vocation, they should examine if their observance of rule is what it ought to be. When observance is persistently disregarded, they will not be truly happy. Faulty religious often lay upon their Superiors and others the blame of their unhappiness, but it lies really with themselves. When it is seen that they are looking for satisfaction where it is not to be found, that they are not devoted to the rule of life of their Institute, and that they are guilty of neglect of some of its wise prescriptions, this will amply account for their unhappiness. Devout religious, by the fervent character of their observance—in which is true wisdom—avoid other kinds of faultiness, and they are happy in their vocation.

12. Religious belong to God.

With holy David religious may say: 'For this is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: He shall rule us for evermore' (Ps. xlvii. 15); for, having consecrated themselves to God, they acknowledge in the most loyal manner His sway over them; and they begin now, in the present life, the service of worship, praise, and conformity with His will, which they hope to continue to render to Him throughout eternity. Religious do not wish to belong to any master, but to God alone. To belong to Him is their joy and consolation. One of the greatest sources of satisfaction to them is that they have consecrated themselves to Him, and that their only end in life is to offer Him service in all they do and in all they suffer. Worldly joys come, and then pass away, but spiritual joys rest in the soul, and make men better and happier.

When persons leave the world and enter religion, one of their first consolations is to feel that, if they have left all else, they have entered into closer union with God, and that they belong in an especial manner to Him.

Let us consider (*a*) how religious no longer belong to the world; (*b*) how they must show that they really belong to God; and (*c*) the faults which are opposed to their consecration to God.

(*a*) The world has come to understand that religious have withdrawn themselves from itself. It recognizes that their avocation is not of a worldly order,

and that they propose to themselves to follow a way of life which embraces prayer, fasting, and good works of various kinds. The world gives up its dominion over them, and they cease to be its servants. Sometimes, seeing that their mind is turned away from itself, the world shows resentment, and persecutes them. In pursuing this unjust treatment of them, it invents calumnies, and seeks to stir up bad feelings against them.

Having left the world, religious are no longer found in worldly gatherings, and they cease from pursuing worldly gains. As far as possible, too, they withdraw themselves from servitude to society's laws. The duties of their state direct their attention to other ways and objects than those which persons in the world pursue. While many persons in the world are playthings of their own will, and consequently fall into many errors, religious escape this misfortune, and seek in religion to do only the will of God, to Whom they belong.

Having withdrawn their allegiance from the world, religious no longer look for satisfactions of a worldly kind. They turn their back on the world's vanities, frivolities, flattery, admiration, wealth, and distinctions. They recognize danger in self-indulgence, independence, ambition, and notice. They are taught to love retirement, silence, self-denial, prayer, submission, and humility. How different, then, is life in religion from life in the world! But all the joys and satisfactions offered by the world are not to be compared with the spiritual satisfactions, peace of mind and joyousness of spirit, which are

enjoyed by devout religious who are true to their calling.

(*b*) St. Paul says: 'Whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's' (Rom. xiv. 8). This happiness of belonging to Christ is open to all Christians; but all do not enjoy it in the same measure, and many, false to their vocation, do not realize it. It is especially realized by religious, for they belong to God, not only by virtue of their baptism, but also by reason of their formal consecration of themselves to Him at their religious profession. Their belonging to God is regarded by them as a real and practical fact; therefore do they seek to do His will, and, moreover, they desire that He may do with them as He wills, since they are His. Do all religious take this view of the meaning of their consecration to God, and of the obligations resulting from it? If it has not this meaning, how can they be said to belong to God?

In whatever way God's will may be made known to religious, they, as belonging to Him, are bound to strive to do it. Devout religious know that God gives the grace necessary for accomplishing all that He wills to be done. They know, too, that God's appointments and demands are always wise and for the best; therefore they do not hesitate to accomplish them. They recognize that this compliance with God's appointments should be rendered when there is question of accepting or relinquishing any office, or of going to any place, or undertaking any duty In these cases they do not seek to influence their Superiors, so that matters may be arranged accord-

ing to their own ideas or preferences, but they place themselves in their hands as if in God's hands, and they pray for grace to do His holy will. In this way do they give practical proof of their dutiful trust in God; and they are confident that He will take care of them, and bring everything to a happy issue. How different is their case from that of religious who plan and intrigue, with a view to bring things about according to their own ideas! How often these are disappointed after all their efforts! and how much merit they lose!

When religious wish only to do what God wills, they are relieved of much anxiety, and they feel satisfied that they will not be misled by their own wilfulness or waywardness. They are also buoyed up with confidence in times of difficulty and opposition; for they know that God, Who permits whatever befalls them, will both support them under these trials and turn the trials to their good. At all times, as well when things go well with them as when cares are upon them, devout religious may say: 'I belong to God: let Him do with me as He pleases.'

(*c*) Religious should not lessen the merit of their consecration to God by any withdrawal or looking back. When once we have given anything to another, it is no longer ours. When religious have given themselves to God, they belong to Him, and not to themselves. May not, then, God do as He wills with what is His? It might prove fatal to their vocation if religious were to fall into a way of seeking to have their own will in everything, and

of consulting only their own ease and convenience. What sacrifice would there be in such conduct? But the consecration of one's self to God surely implies a certain sacrifice of one's self. We cannot always do the will of another without giving up our own will. There is no nobler sacrifice that we could make of ourselves, of our will, time, talents, and life, than when this sacrifice is made to God. What a slight we should offer God if we were to withdraw any part of it! Any such withdrawal would be a fault against the obligations undertaken by our consecration.

Another fault on the part of religious would be mistrust in God's arrangements and dispensations in their regard; for it would show that they take upon themselves to judge of God's dealings with what is His own. It would also appear in the light of a reflection upon God's infinite wisdom. Religious would also offend against their obligations if they evinced a spirit of misgiving, uneasiness, and discontent; for, since they belong to God, they should be at peace, and they should rest assured that His providence watches over them. They cannot be molested without God's permission: and His ways always lead to the furtherance of His loving and merciful designs.

Religious should weigh the meaning and scope of their consecration to God. While they find their comfort in belonging to Him, they should remember that by their consecration they have contracted particular obligations. If, happily, they fulfil them, they will realize the blessings attached to their consecra-

tion. Their piety and their entire devotedness to God will be rewarded now by a relish for what is pleasing to Him, and by contentment of spirit, while awaiting the everlasting reward, which will be union with God in the kingdom of His elect.

13. Tending to Perfection.

Religious have taken upon themselves further obligations than those under which the generality of Christians lie. Besides the way of the commandments, there is also that of the evangelical counsels, and to this way religious are called. They must, therefore, use the means necessary to secure the fulfilment of the counsels, and their life must be in keeping with their profession and with their religious obligations. They are required ever to tend to perfection; they would be religious only in name if they were so far to fall away from religiousness as to have ceased to tend to perfection.

Sometimes, however, religious, through a misunderstanding of what is implied by this duty, confuse two things which are very different in themselves. Tending to perfection does not imply being perfect, nor would the not doing of what is perfect, or the failing to perform a duty perfectly, be always a fault against the duty of tending to perfection. Even when religious do what is faulty, if there be no habit of this faultiness and no persistence in it, it may not show that they are not tending to perfection. When the nature of this obligation is not properly understood, it gives rise to scruples and to

wrong accusations in confession. It is also important to note further that, although the obligation of tending to perfection is, in the case of religious, a grave one considered in itself, yet failure to comply with it may not always be so serious as to be deemed mortal sin.

The obligation may be stated in these terms: Religious are bound to tend to perfection by the observance of their vows and of the rules of their Institute. Persistent and continual neglect of this duty of observance would manifest a neglect of tending to perfection.

We may ask in what case the neglect would amount to a mortal sin.

There would be mortal sin in regard of the obligation of tending to perfection if religious were frequently to break their vows or their rules, and in such a way or to such extent that they might be regarded as unwilling to submit themselves to the common obligation of the vows or to the control of their Institute. There would also be mortal sin if the violation of their obligations were such that they would thereby expose themselves to serious danger of being expelled from the Institute.

The matter of frequency in disregarding religious obligations requires consideration and explanation, so that we may perceive when it would constitute a grave offence against the duty of tending to perfection. We will deal first (*a*) with frequency in breaches of the vows, and then (*b*) with frequency in disregarding the rules.

(*a*) To break one of the vows of religion in a grave

matter once—or once and again, but rarely—would not of itself show a cessation of tending to perfection, because this tending to perfection should be judged by the habitual state of religious.

But when there are frequent breaches of the vows in a grave matter, such conduct would be altogether inconsistent with tending to perfection. In such a case religious would incur double guilt—namely, the guilt of breaking the vows, and, moreover, that of violating the obligation of tending to perfection.

(*b*) We come now to consider the obligation as affected by breaches of the rules of the Institute.

When, as is usually the case, the rules are not of themselves binding under sin, a different view must be taken of the matter. Leaving aside for the moment the question of any scandal that might result, and looking only at the disposition of mind existing in the religious, what should be said of those who are prepared to observe only such rules as bind under mortal sin, or not to offend by their general non-observance to a degree which would constitute a grave offence? Faulty as are their dispositions, we should yet say that they do not sin grievously, but only venially, against their obligation to tend to perfection. They would, however, sin grievously if they were guilty of formal contempt of the rules, for this would be formally to contemn the authority which drew up the rules, which gave them force, or which commands them to be observed. By acting in such a manner, they would in mind and will withdraw themselves from the submission which they promised when they became members of the Institute.

Religious would sin grievously if it were reasonably to be feared or foreseen as likely that on account of frequent faults, even though in themselves venial, they would be dismissed from their Institute. Their sin against the obligation of tending to perfection would not be incurred every time the faults were committed, but would lie in the general want of care and of necessary effort to avoid the faults or to lessen their number.

We have, for the moment, passed over the question of any scandal that might be given, and there is also to be noted the matter of injury to religion. What should now be said on these points?

We must acknowledge that frequent and notable transgressions of the rules, even of those not binding under sin, may be sinful—and even under some circumstances grievously so—when they would cause scandal, or a relaxing of religious discipline. The degree of guilt would correspond with that of the scandal or relaxation caused. By reason of the greater force of example, the sin might more easily be grievous in an ancient religious than in a young one, and in a Superior than in an ordinary subject.

The importance of the rules of an Institute is set in relief when we consider their bearing upon the obligation of tending to perfection. It is not enough that religious should fulfil this obligation by merely keeping their vows, for the obligation extends also to observance of rule. What, then, should be said of religious who systematically omit some of their spiritual exercises, or disregard in many ways the discipline of the rule—matters which are helps to

perfection and to the nourishment of piety and of the religious spirit? May it be said that they are in all earnestness fulfilling their obligation of tending to perfection? Will there not be, in their case, some fault against this obligation?

Religious, while faithfully observing their vows and rules, are fulfilling the obligation of tending to perfection. What peace of mind and comfort this should bring them! and how edifying to others their conduct will be! In tending to perfection there should be *z*eal and effort. These will be in some measure absent in tepid and self-indulgent religious, and in their case progress will not be satisfactory. When religious study God's will in their regard and the nature of their obligations, they see the necessity of earnestness and constancy, and, aided by grace, they go forward in the path of perfection.

14. Helps found in the Religious State.

The religious state has its labours, its obligations, and its consolations. It has also its ways and means. The special helps which religious need in order to enable them to fulfil the requirements of their holy vocation are amply provided, and they must be used. If, unhappily, religious fall away and become remiss, it will be found that they do not employ the means of sanctification and of spiritual help which are provided.

Let us consider four important helps to perfection —namely, (*a*) prayer, (*b*) the holy sacraments, (*c*) discipline, and (*d*) the authority of Superiors.

(*a*) We begin with that help of every day and of every moment which is within the reach of all Christians—namely, prayer. This is mental or vocal, public or private, and provision is made for it in the various spiritual exercises, in the injunctions of the rule, and in the regulations imposed by the members of the community charged with maintaining religious discipline. Fidelity to prayer is rewarded by the gift of spiritual enlightenment, strength, and patience. There should be a habit of secret prayer, for the soul should constantly seek God's help, and should find its pleasure in having recourse to Him in all difficulties and at all times. Devout persons in the world find their time taken up by business occupations or by domestic and social engagements, and they regret that they have so little time for prayer; but religious regard prayer as one of the most important duties of the day, and ample time is marked out at various hours of the day for meditation or vocal prayer. Religious pray also at other times according to their devotion or needs. When temptation arises, when trials occur, when things go wrong, when distressed through fatigue or weariness, when misunderstood or contradicted, and when suffering or sick, they, in all these circumstances, throw themselves upon God in fervent, trustful, and often-renewed prayer. Prayer sustains their soul and brings them comfort.

There are, however, faulty religious who fail to have recourse in this way to prayer. Unhappily, such as these give way to petulancy, to murmuring, and to discouragement, and consequently they do not receive the special support and help which they

need. They might say with David: 'I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread' (Ps. ci. 5). Such as these seem to lose a great deal of the true religious spirit, and they remain long in their faultiness.

In fervent prayer we praise God, we ask for mercy, grace, and protection, and we beseech Him to perfect our will in charity. In devout meditation we study the wonders of God's love and goodness, the life and teaching of our Divine Saviour, and lessons in virtue and piety, and we are drawn in the path of holiness. What a happy provision, then, prayer is to aid religious in the pursuit of their vocation!

(*b*) In the second place, religious are helped and comforted by a frequent reception of the holy sacraments. Fervour in receiving them is fruitful in happy results. In the sacraments, through the ministry of priests, there are Divine operations. They are divinely instituted to be to us channels of much-needed graces, and they tend to lift up the soul to more perfect sentiments, desires, and dispositions. They are the sweetest comforts and divinest attractions in the religious life, and through them our Lord communicates to His spouses and consecrated servants special helps and favours.

The holy sacraments should be received with a spirit of lively faith, and with becoming earnestness and devotion. Although religious may not always experience, in receiving them, the same joy and satisfaction, they should yet beware of anything like chronic carelessness, and of not realizing what

they are doing, and what grace they are receiving. Since the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist are special means of sanctification, to make the soul pure, strong, and fervent, religious should beware of neglecting to make serious effort to correct their faultiness. What token of this effort is in evidence when they repeat again and again the same sin or indiscretion, or continue the same tepid, unsatisfactory conduct? Carelessness in receiving the holy sacraments will result in carelessness in religious life.

(*c*) We come now to exterior helps to true religiousness. Among these there stands, perhaps in the first rank, the discipline of the religious life. This comprises what is termed 'religious observance,' prompt obedience to the horarium of the community, regularity in assisting at the various exercises, submission to those placed in authority, seeking permission in the cases prescribed by the rule, compliance with the rule of silence, fidelity in wearing the religious habit, and, generally, religious behaviour at all times. This discipline has many happy results. It corrects our faulty waywardness, it tends to subdue pride of mind, it checks sensuality, it gives order to life, it disposes the soul for devotion, and it preserves the mind from dissipation and vanities, and gives it a religious tone.

There are, unhappily, religious who find this discipline irksome, and it will be suspected that they are the very ones who have most need of so salutary a help. They are the religious who do not relish labour, trouble, or restraint, who are often

dissipated in mind, who have secret faultiness, who have no love of the interior life, or who are self-indulgent or slothful. If religious such as these were only to love the disciplinary requirements of their rule, and to be faithful in every observance, their faultiness would be gradually corrected, and they would come correspondingly to feel truly happy and contented in their vocation.

(*d*) The last help to religiousness which we will consider is that of the authority of Superiors. It is the duty of Superiors to maintain the observance of rule, and to see to the welfare of the subjects. It belongs to them to guide and to correct their subjects. Their rule should be exercised for the benefit both of the Institute and of the subjects under their charge. Religious, in their relations with their Superior, should bear in mind that there is no question of superior talent, knowledge, or judgment, but one of authority. They should ever respect authority. Just as rebellion is opposed to peace, order, and happiness, so is a wise and ordinate submission to authority conducive to these desirable blessings. Moreover, the care and guidance of the Superior are to religious a source of protection, and a stimulus to faithful observance.

It sometimes happens that the blessings proceeding from the rule of Superiors are not realized, because the subjects are bent upon acting independently, and show themselves unwilling to submit to control. Under such circumstances some Superiors at times, so far as their conscience will allow them, strive not to make their authority felt,

and they may even leave such religious very much to themselves. But is this good for those religious? and is it as it should be?

Submission to the control of Superiors is wise and salutary, and, moreover, it is fruitful in merit. Religious should therefore avoid all faultiness in their relations with their Superiors. They should not stand aloof from them, nor disregard their regulations. They should not form parties to criticize or condemn them and their actions.

The benefit to be derived from the four helps which we have been considering will depend upon religious themselves. If religious, moved by a desire of advancing in the path of perfection, use these helps profitably, it will follow that their religious life will be more perfect and happier, and more in keeping with what God wills it to be.

15. Blessings and Hindrances.

The study of what the religious state is in itself, of the blessings which are attached to it, and of its fruits in the soul and life of those who embrace it, and the thought of its future rewards, should make religious sincerely value their vocation, and seek to remove all obstacles to fidelity in following it. Might they not say with St. Peter on Mount Tabor, 'It is good for us to be here' (St. Matt. xvii. 4)?

How different is the condition of religious from that of many persons pursuing worldly avocations! Many of these are in peril because of the vanities and wickedness of the world. Poor worldlings! we may

say to them, you do not always perceive the risks you run when you are not God-fearing and pious. David addresses them, saying: 'O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?' (Ps. iv. 3). But religious are happily protected from these snares and dangers by their profession and by their rules.

In the world, moreover, there are many persons who disregard God's holy commandments, and who have become a law to themselves. Their minds entertain unprofitable and evil thoughts, their hearts are given to inordinate desires, and many are their sins both by commission and by omission; for, as David says, 'There is no fear of God before their eyes' (Ps. xiii. 3). But religious have consecrated themselves to God to be ever His servants, and their whole thought is ever to do His will. They are therefore as the just man, of whom David says: 'His will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night' (Ps. i. 2). Well, then, may religious be happy in their vocation, and say, 'It is good for us to be here.'

Let us consider (1) some of the blessings attached to a religious vocation, and also (2) what may be deemed hindrances to their enjoyment.

1. It is good for religious to be what they are, on account of the blessings enjoyed (*a*) during life, (*b*) at death, and (*c*) after death.

(*a*) How blessed are all who leave all things to follow Christ! Their happiness more than compensates them for the pleasures, comforts, and earthly

goods of which they have deprived themselves in order to pursue their vocation. Otherwise why would our Lord have made them so consoling a promise? His words were: 'Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting' (St. Matt. xix. 29). The blessings of the religious life are chiefly of the spiritual order, but they include also peace of life and many joys and comforts resulting from the order and charity which reign in a religious community. Graces proceed abundantly from the holy sacraments, prayer, the spiritual exercises, the seeking to do God's will, pious and charitable works, patient labour, and fidelity in observing the rule. Day by day merits are accumulated and sanctifying grace is increased. Religious may not themselves be conscious of all this as they pursue their even way, but their guardian angels keep a faithful record of it. How unworldly is their life, but how fruitful in heavenly blessings!

(*b*) A holy life leads to a happy death. How little do religious deem all worldly considerations when they prepare to leave this world! No worldly ties hold them bound to earth. Special blessings are accorded to them, that they may becomingly close their sojourn on earth. Of their death it is written: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints' (Ps. cxv. 15). It is the closing act of a well-spent life. How different is their death from that of most worldly persons! There is no distress in connection with it and no misgiving about it, as the

prayer is uttered: 'May thy place be this day in peace, and thine abode in holy Sion.'

(*c*) Death is the passage to the future recompense. To the devout religious our Lord has given the promise: 'Thou shalt have treasure in heaven' (St. Matt. xix. 21). Religious who have left all things for God's sake are to 'possess life everlasting.' What a happy exchange! At death they will receive reward for the consecration they made of themselves to God; for the poverty, chastity, and obedience practised in the religious life; for their observance of rule; and for all their acts of self-denial, charity, humility, piety, and patience. In all these ways they have added to their merit, and laid up for themselves treasures in heaven (St. Matt. vi. 20).

In order to secure for themselves these blessings, in this world and the next, religious should set great value on their holy vocation, and recognize how important it is to fulfil the obligations it imposes. Let them with courage and patience and with confidence in God strive ever to persevere in fervour in the way of a devout religious life, in order to prove their gratitude to God for the inestimable blessing of so holy a calling.

2. There are hindrances to religious progress, and these are also obstacles to peace and happiness. They come of human weakness and of unfaithfulness in pursuit of the religious vocation.

Sometimes religious lose energy and become remiss through discontent or discouragement. They look inordinately for sensible comforts and helps, or they tire of labour and effort; and this leads them

to murmur and to lose heart. If they do not check and correct themselves, this faultiness will gain ground, and it will change their whole conduct, and weaken their religious spirit. Another fault which is just as serious, and which will lead to the same results, is the indulgence of sloth. This is a decided impediment to spiritual progress; it is as a worm that eats its way into the very core of true religiousness.

An undisciplined mind and heart will cause religious to commit many faults against the rule, and will prove in a general way an obstacle to obedience. Where there is a want of discipline there will often be also an absence of discretion, and this may lead to serious faults of various kinds, resulting in disedification to the neighbour.

Other hindrances to religious progress are tepidity, impatience, and self-seeking, for these imperfections lead to much faultiness. While they are not combated, they become more pronounced in character, and become even as a habit, and then it will be difficult to eradicate them. Religious should therefore be convinced of the duty they lie under of detecting their own faultiness and of labouring ever to remove the causes of it.

God, Who has bestowed on religious the grace of their privileged vocation, will aid them to accomplish all that it demands of them, and to combat whatever is an obstacle to it. Let them ever seek His aid in prayer, accompanied always with the necessary desire, will, and effort on their part, and He will be their helper and protector. Then will they enjoy

the blessings of their state, and make progress towards the perfection to which they are called.

16. The Demands of Community Life.

The religious of the various Congregations and Institutes who are under simple vows are neither solitaries nor recluses. They live in community. Community life has its benefits and its obligations. The benefits are chiefly mutual support, help, sympathy, and edification. We will consider some of the obligations imposed by this kind of life.

We ask, then, What does community life demand of the members of the community? Among the obligations entailed are particularly these three: there should be (*a*) a common spirit, (*b*) combined action, and (*c*) mutual charity.

(*a*) There should be in every community a common spirit. We have seen elsewhere that every Institute has a spirit proper to itself, and distinguishing it from other Institutes. We may say that, just as every Institute has its own distinctive habit exteriorly, so has it its own distinctive spirit interiorly. Now, this distinctive spirit should pervade the whole Institute, and it should be the spirit of all its members; then will there be a common spirit in every community. To acquire this spirit should be the aim of the novices, and to maintain it the aim of the professed religious.

Since all the members belong to the same Institute, all should have the same aims and the same hopes, and therefore should there be in all the same

admirable dispositions of zeal, devotedness, piety, and religiousness. There may be a difference of degree in these dispositions in the various members, according to the measure of grace given, but in some degree they should be found in all the members.

In a regiment of soldiers all will be well if all the soldiers be animated with the same loyalty, the same love of their regiment, the same disciplinary spirit, and the same military ardour. We may with confidence say, too, that in a religious community there will be order, vigour, contentment, and peace, if one spirit actuates all the members, and then will externs be able to affirm that all the members are alike. When, however, externs remark that certain members are not like the rest, there is very probably something wrong. It might even be surmised concerning them, either that they have not a true vocation, or that they have lost the true spirit of their Institute.

In opposition to the common spirit which should exist in all the members of a community, and which is demanded by community life, we find other spirits, and these should be corrected. We single out these three: (1) The individual spirit, (2) the dissatisfied spirit, and (3) the party spirit.

1. When religious are actuated by the individual spirit, they show independence or unwillingness to fall into line with the other members of the community. They stand apart, and seek their own ends. They cross others in their views and mode of action, and at times they are meddlesome. The individual spirit does not amalgamate with the common spirit.

2. When religious have a dissatisfied spirit, they find fault with others, and with everything. Only their own intimate friends escape censure. A dissatisfied spirit causes religious to fancy that the Superiors are against them, or that they do not understand them. It leads them to believe that they have not received due consideration in what has been arranged as to offices and employment, or as to diet and clothing. The dissatisfied spirit finds a grievance almost everywhere.

3. The party spirit is more troublesome and more dangerous than the others which we have noted, but these others have their place in it. When there is unhappily a party spirit in a community, there is a combination, and numbers give it strength. It creates a split in the community. The combination is sometimes directed against certain other members of the community, and at other times against authority. The party spirit is one that dissolves union, and causes disturbance and many miseries.

Religious should beware of these three spirits, which are opposed to the common spirit that ought to reign in their Institute, and that is so necessary to the maintenance and happiness of community life.

(*b*) Community life also demands combined action. We see how, in the human body, the various members and organs, every one in its own place and according to its special functions, play their part, and all goes well. We note how, in an engine, the various parts of the machinery act in combination, and all goes well. Thus should it be in the religious

life. In every community there must be an adjustment of the work and efforts of the members, according to their strength, talents, and accomplishments, and all the members must fulfil their charge: then all will be well. The combined action in their case, to be effective, must be in the right direction, at its proper time, and with the requisite effort: then, without any disorganization or confusion, everything will run smoothly, and all the members of the community will fulfil their appointed parts in what has to be done, and there will result mutual satisfaction and general contentment and peace.

Three things are opposed to combined action—namely, unapproved individual action, tardiness, and neglect.

When there is unapproved individual action, there is often misapplied zeal. This kind of action impedes rather than assists what has to be done. It upsets plans, wastes effort, creates disorder, and causes annoyance. Religious, therefore, should not seek to work according to their own ideas and on their own lines. They should submit to the judgment and arrangements of their Superiors. Things will go well if they only take their appointed place and do their appointed work. Some religious waste time and effort in doing earnestly what they plan for themselves, or what is not to the purpose, instead of doing what is wisely marked out for them to do. Their action, therefore, is not in the right direction.

Tardiness is opposed to combined action in the matter of time. It is a failure in punctuality and promptitude—a beginning late and out of time what

has to be done, or such slowness of energy and effort as to take unreasonable time in doing it. Some religious are never in time, and they are so slow in action that, in the time allowed, they do only half what might be done. Tardiness of this kind is more serious when the work to be done is paid for, and when what is actually done is not commensurate with the sum that is paid.

Neglect is also opposed to combined action. It is in some respects, if not entirely, a failure of action or a falling out of line. Where there is neglect, there is not the requisite effort; and as a result the work will be to some extent a failure, or the labour will fall more heavily on others. Religious who are known to be neglectful cannot be fully counted upon by their Superiors, because the Superiors will not be certain that the work appointed to them will be done properly, or at all.

Religious who desire the works of their community to prosper, and who wish to merit for it confidence and esteem, will beware of impeding the efficacy of combined action in any of these ways. Avoiding neglect and remissness, they will strive to work systematically, with promptitude, and all together, in combined action.

(*c*) The bond of union necessary to a happy community life consists in the practice of mutual charity. This matter requires separate treatment. Let it suffice to say here and now that, in every community, there should be among its members mutual good-feeling, kindness in word and manner, forbearance and sympathy. Then will the religious

help one another, rejoice in one another's success, desire one another's welfare, and show sympathy with one another in trouble and sorrow. If such be the happy relations existing among the members of a community, Christian peace will reign in it, and in it, too, will the religious virtues thrive in the golden sunshine of charity.

Only let there be in every religious community a common spirit, combined action, and mutual charity, and then will there be true community life, and the reign of peace, virtue, and piety. These and other blessings and gifts of the Holy Ghost will betoken God's good pleasure, and externs will thank God for the edification that is given.

17. Mutual Charity.

We have seen that community life demands a common spirit, and also combined action. In the third place, as we saw, it demands mutual charity.

Mutual charity is the holy bond which cements all the members of a community in strong and constant union. This charity must not be sentimental; it must not be founded only on the ties of nature; it must not proceed from selfish and personal motives; it must not be conditional on receiving some adequate return; it must not be fitful or fickle; it must not be exclusive; and, finally, it must not seek out individuals for its object.

Let us, then, consider what should be (1) the character, and (2) the manifestations of this charity.

1. Charity should be supernatural in its principle and universal in its scope.

The mutual charity which community life demands must be supernatural in its principle; it must come of grace, and it must rest upon the Divine universal law which requires us, for the love of God, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We must love our neighbour because God commands us to do so. God will give religious the grace needed to enable them to practise mutual charity, just as He bestows abundantly all graces that are of necessity for salvation. The measure of the gift may indeed be different in every case; but if religious sincerely desire it, if they pray for it, and if they fulfil the conditions of obtaining it, this most precious gift of charity will be bestowed upon them.

Not only may the measure of the Divine gift be different in every case, but charity may also vary in every case in intensity. Religious may love some more than others. This is not necessarily contrary to the Divine law, but care must yet be taken that their charity be not dictated by any unworthy or inordinate motive, or by too natural a motive, for such would vitiate their affections. They must also take care that their preferences for certain persons be not accompanied by any uncharitableness towards others.

Another quality of true charity consists in its being universal in its scope: it must embrace every neighbour. Do not religious understand that they should give a bright and constant example of this universal charity? Its practice demands that they should overcome natural repugnances, put away all resentment, and rise superior to everything like conceit, jealousy, and envy. This universal character of

charity will put their virtue to the test, and it may be said that it is the quality in this eminent virtue which is the most difficult of attainment. It is a quality which, by its nobility and excellence, elevates the soul and expands its best sentiments. It corrects all littleness in action and all selfishness. Charity endowed with this quality does not permit us to despise anyone or to treat anyone with disregard. Our Lord teaches us what extent Christian charity should reach where He says: 'Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you' (St. Matt. v. 44). In true charity there is nothing harsh or forbidding to repel anyone, even a stranger.

Have religious reason to ask themselves if they are actuated in their relations with their neighbour generally by a charity which is both supernatural and universal? Does this holy virtue, such as it ought to be practised, thrive in their communities? If religious love one another for God's sake, and because it is His command that they should do so, their charity will extend to all the members of their community and of their Institute, without exception.

2. We come now to consider how charity should be manifested. If, as a beautiful flower, it blossoms in the hearts of religious, it should emit a fragrant odour around them. Charity is not selfish, nor is it inconsiderate in regard of the neighbour, and occasions of manifesting it occur daily in every community. Charity will manifest itself in religious (*a*) in their words and in their tone and manner of expressing themselves; and (*b*) in their acts, in their

manner of doing anything for their neighbour, and in their bearing towards the other members of the community.

(*a*) Actuated by true charity, religious will not say unkind things or use harsh words, but they will speak considerately both *to* and *of* their neighbour. Their conversation will not be uncharitable : it will even spare the neighbour when at fault ; nor will it be provocative of anger through incisive remarks or otherwise. In conversation religious will avoid causing pain. In these ways they will show that they understand the claims of charity. Conversation, according to times and circumstances, should be instructive, entertaining, agreeable, or amusing, but never should it be embittered by animosity or by want of consideration. The tone of voice, expression, and manner employed in speaking should not display disregard or any intention of belittling any member of the community in the eyes of the others.

(*b*) In action, charity will lead religious to perform little kindnesses as occasions may occur, and in their ordinary dealings with other members of the community they will try not to cause trouble or annoyance. For this reason religious will study to observe the laws of common politeness. In time of sickness or difficulty they will tender sympathy, and they will be glad to render any help or service in their power. In all acts, of whatever kind, which charity may prompt, religious will show themselves pleased to perform them. If it were to appear that they considered these acts a burden or trouble, the acts would lose the savouriness of charity. Others would be

sorry to make any demand if they thought it would be complied with unwillingly or begrudgingly.

In their whole bearing towards the other members of the community religious will display gentleness, meekness, and affability. Their bearing should render their relations with them easy and pleasant. It should invite confidence and inspire esteem. Haughtiness, abruptness, bad temper, incivility, moroseness, and overbearingness, are obstacles to mutual charity. St. Paul says: 'Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely: is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil' (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5).

Charity in thought, word, and deed should reign as a queen in every religious community. The practice of charity is one of the essential duties of community life. St. Peter says: 'But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves' (1 St. Peter iv. 8). David says: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Ps. cxxxii. 1). 'In unity,' he says; not in disunion or dissension. Dissension is the bane of community life. Alas for those who introduce it! Do they comprehend fully the evil they thereby do? Is it just to the religious who entered religion, hoping therein to find peace, if some members of the community dispel peace and introduce dissension? Peace and piety depart by the same door by which dissension enters. What will then become of community life, which should ever be so peaceful, happy, and holy?

Mutual charity will be the fruitful source of many blessings. It is a heaven-born virtue, and it will diffuse heavenly peace wherever it is loved and practised. It is a virtue very dear to the Sacred Heart, and one declared by our Lord to be the mark of His discipleship; for He said: 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another' (St. John xiii. 35). Religious should pray often for the gift of charity, and for its spread and increase.

18. Guiding Motives.

Persons embrace the religious life under the guidance of various motives. In some cases the motive is to make more secure their salvation, or zeal for their neighbour's salvation, or the desire to please God more and more, and to imitate our Lord more perfectly; or, finally, they are drawn to religion by the very attractiveness of religious life and its opportunities for practising virtue. Having entered religion with certain objects or ends in view, the life of religious should have its relation to those ends, and it should be in keeping with them.

It should be as it is in the case of a scholar. Since he goes to school with the motive of learning, his life at school should be spent in learning—that is, to learn should be his object in the various classes and exercises of his school life. What are the two chief ends which persons have in view when they enter the religious life? Are they not, first, to become more devotedly servants of God; and

secondly, to labour more earnestly for their sanctification? This being so, their life in religion should be in keeping with these two ends; their time should be consecrated religiously to labouring for them, and their actions should be referred to them.

Religious may need to be warned against diverting their attention and efforts from what is most important—namely, the pursuit of the chief ends of a religious life. The scholar who goes to school to learn may waste his time; he may give way to laziness, or he may give his mind only to sport and games. Thus may it be also in the case of religious, for they may be subjected to various distractions and temptations that would divert their thoughts to other pursuits—to pursuits less useful and advantageous than those which drew them to the religious state. Religious may become lazy or remiss; they may give too much attention to their own ease, comfort, or convenience; or they may cease to think of God in what they do, and may seek to please, not Him, but themselves or others; and thus it may come to pass that they will give but little serious thought to the work of their sanctification. They will not be unconscious of the faultiness of their conduct, but this will not trouble them so long as they do not fall into mortal sin. This is only a picture of what may happen. What should be said of remiss religious in whom such a picture has an actual counterpart? Whereas they came to religion to be pious, unworldly, protected from danger, and detached from creatures, they have fallen away, and become dissipated in mind, inordinate in their affections, perhaps

indiscreet in their conduct, unobservant, and disedifying. Such religious have ceased to be impelled and guided in their aims and conduct by the holy motives which directed them to religion.

These reflections should convince religious of the usefulness of frequently recalling the motives that should guide and sustain them in their pursuit of their vocation. Religious should constantly purify their intentions, and renew their consecration of their life to God. They should have holy guiding motives, and these should be effectual for maintaining them in true religiousness of mind and conduct. Let us make a few reflections upon the two guiding motives already mentioned—(*a*) that of pleasing God, and (*b*) that of labouring for their sanctification.

(*a*) The guiding motive of religious throughout their life should be that of pleasing God. How much this must mean for their spiritual joy and for peace of soul! When they rise in the morning, they will feel thankful that another day has been granted them wherein to strive to please God. When at their meditations and other spiritual exercises, at their appointed duties, or at their recreations, and in their dealings with those under their care, their motive will always be that of pleasing God. And when the day closes, their only thought will still be to please God. This is just as it should be. If religious act thus under the prompting of this holy motive, should it not comfort them, and calm any uneasiness about the character of their doings? And will it not even make amends for slight faults occurring during each day? If religious be ac-

customed to recall this motive from time to time, then, when any temptation arises, or when any departure from duty is suggested, will it not occur to them to reflect that they must not displease God? They will accustom themselves to the pious use of such ejaculations as 'All for Thee, O my God,' and this will stimulate them to fervour, patience, and generosity.

Will not this guiding motive of doing everything to please God make religion real? Will it not strengthen the soul in charity and other exalted virtues? Will it not save religious from what is sinful or unworthy? Will it not preserve them from yielding to the cravings of evil passions or self-will, and from loving the esteem of the world or whatever is opposed to the spirit and demands of their holy vocation?

(*b*) Religious should also be guided in all their life by the motive of labouring for their sanctification. Everything they do may, by God's grace, be so done as to make them more holy in God's sight. If they are eager for their sanctification, they will not lose the opportunities which are ever present of advancing it. These are, for instance, daily fidelity in observing the rule and in performing the duties marked out for them, the exact practice of silence and recollection, maintaining charitable relations with all around them, being patient under contradictions and other trials, fervour in prayer and in receiving the holy sacraments, and cheerfulness and amiability during the recreations. All this will not prove difficult or burdensome when the guiding

motive of religious is to labour effectively for their sanctification.

Devout religious do not delude themselves by thinking that they may spend their life in any lax manner, but they see how it is their duty to correct their faultiness, and to live up to the standard of perfection demanded of them. Therefore do they ever bear in mind their frailty and the dire possibility either of their being surprised in some grave fault, or of their gradually falling into a condition of tepidity and carelessness fraught with many spiritual dangers; and they seek to protect themselves against both these possibilities by their conscientious labour for their sanctification. Perhaps even without their reflecting that it is so, this becomes their guiding motive in all they do. If they were to cease to be zealous for their sanctification, a sense of alarm or uneasiness would come over them, and cause them to enter into themselves and to return to fervour. When religious are sensible of their being unhappy, let them examine and see if they have sufficient zeal for their sanctification.

If the desire to please God and to labour for their sanctification are the two guiding motives of religious, they will feel reassured as to the state of their soul, and as to their giving the right place in their thought and service both to God and to their soul.

19. Necessity of Patience.

In religion, as in other states of life, there is need of patience. Opposition, failures, disappointments,

and other such trials, meet us everywhere in life, and every calling has its own peculiar difficulties. Our Lord says to us what He said to His disciples in His own day: 'In your patience you shall possess your souls' (St. Luke xxi. 19). Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. It buds, blossoms, and bears fruit in every soul that is in holy union with this Divine Spirit. We have therefore seen patience in the Saints, and we see it in devout religious. All religious should desire this holy fruit for themselves. St. Paul says: 'Patience is necessary for you: that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise' (Heb. x. 36). It may be that many things try the patience of religious; but religious should ever pray to God for grace to be constant under their trials, and they should not allow themselves to be inordinately disturbed.

We will consider how trouble comes (1) from their own weaknesses and imperfections, (2) from the circumstances of their calling, and (3) from their surroundings.

1. In the first place we will consider how religious may be tempted to discouragement on account of their own weaknesses and imperfections. How changeable under various circumstances is their own temperament! Sometimes they are all fire, and at other times they are indifferent and seem to have no energy to do anything. How often they may display fickleness of character and want of steadiness of purpose! When they become conscious of this they may feel dissatisfied with themselves, and they may despond,

They have their various moods. Sometimes they are dissipated, and at other times they are morose; at one time fervent and at another careless. They may also be subject to natural sensitiveness, impatience, or impetuosity. They may at times be cross with themselves because they do not succeed like others. Discouragement may be felt because they find themselves ever relapsing into the same faults, without satisfactory evidence of amendment or improvement. They may also see themselves subject to human respect, and distressed because they think others are aware of their faults. At times, too, lest they might displease others or fearing what others might say, they are not staunch in dutifulness.

In the case of some religious such weaknesses and imperfections give rise to discouragement. This, however, should not be so. If they have patience with the faultiness of others, let them also have patience with themselves. Discouragement will not prompt a healthy desire of amendment. Religious should humbly acknowledge that they have their weaknesses and imperfections, and their daily efforts should be directed to their correction. They should pray for grace to correct themselves, and they should watch their progress, particularly when they are employed in examining their conscience. They should also thank God for having by His grace preserved them from graver faults, and for all His long-suffering and mercy. Then, with peaceful minds, while lamenting whatever faultiness there may have been, let them strive to keep a greater watch over themselves, with a view to doing better.

If, instead of acting in this manner, religious lose patience with themselves, it will not tend to mend matters; but, on the contrary, discouragement will lessen their spiritual energy and effort, and they will fall from one imperfection into another.

2. Discouragement comes to religious from the circumstances of their calling, and chiefly (*a*) from the nature of the demands of their vocation, and (*b*) from the monotony of their manner of life.

(*a*) Religious have to live under the obligations of vows and of their rule. It may appear to some that there must therefore be a constant tension. If this tension be felt, it need not be arduous or painful: it should be easy and it should be loved. There need not be an effort attended with anxiety, but one that it should be a pleasure to make. A great deal depends on the firm will and solid virtue of the religious, who should bear in mind our Lord's words: 'My yoke is sweet, and My burden light.'

Religious have to tend to perfection by their faithful observance of what is demanded by their vows and by their rule. Some religious fall into a state of dejection and of scruple, because they still have their faults, and because they do not perceive their own progress in perfection. But these religious are faithful to their vows, and commit but few faults against their rule; they are still tending to perfection. It is possible that in other cases humility is wanting. Do religious sometimes fret and desire to be better, so that they may be more satisfied with

themselves, and stand better in the eyes of others, but without having chiefly at heart to please God and to prove more worthy of their vocation?

(*b*) Religious must bear patiently the monotony of their manner of life. Weak religious will be impatient under it, and they may murmur about it, and desire change and novelty. But these things might tend to lessen their love of the Sovereign Good, Who is unchangeable. As, day by day, religious perform the same duties and assist at the same spiritual exercises, let them strive to perform them with ever fresh fervour and devotedness. The monotony of which some complain should tend to evenness and peace of mind, which would very likely be dissipated by novelty and change. The less change and disturbance there are in the exterior life, the greater should be interior recollection, peace, and spiritual progress.

In these circumstances of their calling religious should practise patience, and to do this they should cast themselves more and more upon God, Who should ever be the object of their love and service and the ground and foundation of their confidence. Their holy vocation is from Him, and He will supply all the means and graces needful to its accomplishment. He will give them grace to love it and to be attached religiously to it, and by His continual aid they will be faithful to its requirements. When religious are fretful and wanting in patience, it may be a sign, not of pious zeal, but of self-love. The holy writer says: 'Wait on God with patience; join thyself to God and endure' (Ecclus. ii. 3). If

religious do this, they may with confidence expect God's comfort in His own good time.

3. Sometimes, lastly, trouble comes to religious from their surroundings—that is, directly or indirectly from others. This should not cause them to lose patience or to give way to discontent.

Religious live in community, and they also have relations with externs. It would be strange if their patience were not tried in one way or another. Annoyance may arise from the failings of others, and others may at times become even as a stumbling-block to them, to cause them to offend God by unfaithfulness to their religious obligations. Then they have to bear with the character and peculiarities of the members of their own community. Notwithstanding their charitable intentions, there may be on their part a natural antipathy which makes it hard to show kindness and sympathy to certain members. Their patience may be tried also when others, even Superiors, misunderstand them, seem to dislike them, and show them but little favour. At times, too, others cause them inconvenience, suffering, derangement of work, or some unpleasant duty. All these and other such causes try their patience; but how unpleasant matters would be if, under all these various circumstances, religious were to break out in anger or impatience, and to disturb religious peace! These causes of impatience to imperfect religious are regarded by the more devout as their cross, and as affording them a grand opportunity of practising virtue. Their motto is: Be patient with others, even as you would have others to be patient

with you. Jesus Christ, Who bears with our infirmities, is their model. Religious should ever remember the close relationship which patience has to the eminent and all-necessary virtue of charity. Let them reflect upon St. Paul's exhortation: 'Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ' (Rom. xv. 5).

If religious do not endeavour to restrain their impatience, they will often be carried away by the violence of their disturbed feelings. Consider some of the unpleasant and undesirable results of habitual impatience. These results, which should cause distress to religious, are dissatisfaction with themselves and unpleasantness with others, a sourness of disposition, interior disturbance, bursts of anger, and a falling-off in fervour and religiousness. How rightly, then, did St. Paul say: 'Patience is necessary for you' (Heb. x. 36)! Religious should labour to cultivate peace of mind and contentment, even in the midst of the disturbances incident to our present existence, and they should recognize the necessity of practising self-restraint and forbearance, without which patience will not be long maintained. Let them in sorrow and trial have recourse to the Sacred Heart, which was once laden with the burden of their own many sins, and learn from it how to suffer patiently and to bear with patience the wrongs inflicted by others.

20. Opposing Spirits.

It is not to be expected that the religious life will be maintained, and become as a second nature, without some difficulty, obstruction, or opposition. There must be the religious spirit; this is its soul. The discipline of the religious life helps to engender and to form, and also to preserve, the religious spirit. There are other spirits in opposition to this spirit, and they should be regarded as enemies to the religious life. It is well for us to know our enemies, for we will then be on our guard against them.

Let me point out to you three enemies. They are (*a*) the sensual spirit, (*b*) the worldly spirit, and (*c*) the undisciplined spirit.

(*a*) First, there is the sensual spirit. This spirit inclines men to a love of ease and pleasure, and to self-indulgence in its many forms. The Apostle tells us that 'the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14). Where there is the sensual spirit, there will not be self-denial, but there will be a shirking of what is hard or difficult. There will also be some unreality in prayer, a disrelish for spiritual things, a badly balanced mind, and a seeking after what satisfies self-indulgence. As a consequence of all this, it should not surprise us if there were faults against poverty, murmuring under inconveniences, and inordinate self-seeking in matters of diet, clothing, and repose. The sensual spirit, when not sufficiently restrained, may also prove a source of danger in various ways, even to holy chastity, for this virtue needs to be pro-

tected and fostered by the mortification and restraint of the senses and of the appetite, and by a wise discretion in conduct. Religious who do not control and correct this spirit will not only feel ill at ease themselves under the mortification imposed by the religious life, but they will also give disedification to others by their immortified ways and ill-judged conversations. I say 'by their conversations' because the spirit that is in them will manifest itself in their speech. Of this our Lord assures us where He says: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (St. Matt. xii. 34). We see, then, how much the sensual spirit is opposed to the religious spirit.

(*b*) Secondly, there is the worldly spirit. Where there is fervent religious life, there are a tone and an atmosphere of religion. There is a religiousness not only in dress, but also in bearing, character, and behaviour, and in conversation subjects are viewed from a religious standpoint. How much in opposition to all this is the worldly spirit! The worldly-minded will display their spirit in their conversation, in their movements and unrestrained glances, in their general conduct in the religious house and out of it, in their seeking to associate with seculars, in their laughter and want of religious decorum, in their disrelish for the spiritual exercises and for silence, in their love of dissipation, and perhaps in the class of books they prefer to read, and in various intrigues. They will take pleasure in discussing vanities and worldly topics, and they will criticize unkindly the devout members of the community, and

speak without due respect about devout practices. Do we not see how dangerous to religious life such a spirit must be? It perhaps leads us to ask if religious who have this worldly spirit have a true vocation to the religious life.

(*c*) Thirdly and finally, there is the undisciplined spirit. Religious life demands a giving up of our own wishes and ways, so that we may carry out what is required of us by our rules, by our Superiors, and by the various duties of our calling. It demands exterior conformity with the ways of the religious life. Perhaps in meeting these demands consists principally the self-denial required of religious. Meeting them should not, therefore, be regarded as of only trifling importance to the work of our sanctification. How, then, will matters stand, if this giving up of our wishes and ways be regarded as too irksome, and if it be not complied with?

There are religious who do find it irksome, religious who have no love of the discipline of the religious life. They neglect observance; they omit some of their spiritual exercises; they want everything to be regulated according to their ideas; they do not wish to be bound to time for their various duties; they speak when it suits them to do so; they are happy if they can escape from the routine of their religious life; they would like to prolong the recreations and to shorten the spiritual exercises; they disregard certain points of religious decorum; and, finally, they perhaps try to bring other religious under their influence, so as to lead them to adopt their objectionable and faulty ways. What must be

said of religious who act thus? They have an undisciplined spirit. This is a spirit opposed to holy obedience, to love of rule, and to good order. In these religious themselves it disturbs the sense of spiritual rest, it creates a feeling of unsatisfactoriness, and it robs the soul of much merit.

The undisciplined spirit renders its victims undesirable models in any community. If there is any disorder or any murmuring and discontent in a community, it will be found to have originated from some religious with an undisciplined spirit. How opposed, then, to the true idea of religious life is this spirit!

It remains only to warn religious against these three kinds of serious obstacles to their perfection and to religious life itself—the sensual spirit, the worldly spirit, and the undisciplined spirit. Not these unruly spirits, but the earnest religious spirit will be blessed by God, and will promote spiritual progress.

21. Religious Detachment.

If, as we have already seen, religious give themselves to God, and if they are called to tend to perfection by the observance of the vows and rules, they must necessarily detach themselves from the world and from whatever would prevent that observance. Let us examine some of the ways in which they should practise detachment.

There should be detachment (*a*) from the world, (*b*) from riches, (*c*) from inordinate affections, and (*d*) from self-will.

(*a*) In the first place, there should be detachment from the world. It is evident from the strictness of the religious enclosure existing in some Institutes that religious are intended to be separated from the world, and from unnecessary and useless intercourse with persons of the world. They are required to be detached from the ways, the display, and the vanities of the world. The atmosphere, pursuits, and surroundings in religion are different from those of the world, and they are intended to preclude all worldliness. Religious cannot, therefore, consistently love religion, and at the same time love the world. How different, for instance, are the ways and works of these two spheres! In religion there are silence, recollection, prayer, and labour for God—practices and occupations which have no prominent place in the world. Therefore must religious detach themselves from it.

This detachment is one of the graces which came to them with their vocation; but, like other actual graces, it must be co-operated with in spirit and practice. Therefore must religious cultivate a spirit of detachment, and they must also practise detachment, by mortifying their desire of associating with seculars, and by avoiding worldly displays and amusements. If no such effort be made, then worldly ideas and a spirit of worldliness may be resumed, and these will militate against the religious spirit, and against a preference for spiritual things.

The holy habit worn by religious ever preaches to them the lesson that they belong to God, and that they wear His livery, and not the livery of the world.

Let them recall St. Paul's words: 'Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ' (Gal. i. 10). If they were to spend their lives in striving to please the world, or in seeking worldly vanities, they would lose their title to the name they bear.

(*b*) In the second place, there should be detachment from riches. Religious vow poverty. It is necessary, then, that they should be detached from riches, and from the worldly advantages which riches bring. These things have no charm for a truly religious heart. Devout religious seek to detach themselves even from what they have in daily use, and consequently these necessary things do not prove any impediment to their spirit of poverty. If religious have the true spirit of poverty, they will not easily commit any breach of the vow of poverty. Their holy habit is the habit of the poor—there is nothing rich or gaudy about it; and it should ever remind them of the condition of voluntary poverty which they have embraced.

Why, then, do some religious wish for expensive articles, and for the comforts attached to riches? Why do they ever wish to spend money, if only small sums, without considering what the spirit of poverty dictates? Why, too, do they complain when at times they feel the effects of religious poverty? Is it not because they are not detached from worldly goods, and from the love of the ease and comforts which are enjoyed by the rich?

(*c*) In the third place, there should be detachment from inordinate affections. If religious do not

school their affections, and practise detachment from creatures, they will have a dissipated mind, and they may expose themselves to some indiscretion and even to danger of infidelity to their vow of chastity. They are not expected to be without affection; but in so delicate a matter they must be very discreet. They must put a limit, marked by a wise guardedness, and beyond it they must not permit themselves to go.

Religious must not allow their affections to run away with them; but they must keep them under prudent control. When they become aware of any attraction towards particular persons, they should pray, and ask to be preserved from every inordinate affection. They must at the outset check the natural waywardness of their affections, and shelter themselves under a guard of prudence and moderation, ever taking care not to turn aside from, or to offend, God, the Sovereign Good, or to forget His supreme claims upon their love. Then will they be spared many anxieties, and misgivings, and be saved from impressions that might haunt them perhaps for years.

There are affections that are foolish, and others that are dangerous. Religious should wisely avoid both kinds. Let them look well to the protection and safeguarding of the holy virtue, and ever remember the sacred bond of their vow. Their holy habit should remind them that they are consecrated to God, and that they should strive to be ever worthy of their heavenly Lord, and dear to His Sacred Heart.

(*d*) In the fourth place, and lastly, religious should be detached from their own self-will. They are vowed to obedience, and established in a state of life demanding submission. It will not be enough to be detached from the world, from riches, and from inordinate affections, they must also be detached from the spirit of waywardness, for in many ways they are required to give up their own will.

Religious do not enter religion to do their own will, but to submit to the yoke of religion. What, then, should be said of those who presently wish to do as they like, and to have everything according to their own way, and who resent control? We must say that they are not detached from their own self-will. This detachment is very necessary, if they would labour effectually for their sanctification. For without it, they will be unfaithful in the practice of obedience, and in compliance with the prescriptions of their rule. Self-restraint is necessary to obedience.

Religious have to do the will of those who are in authority over them. They must mortify their self-will, if they would have the true spirit of obedience, and if they would observe fully and readily what obedience demands of them. Attachment to their own will is the greatest obstacle to this necessary submission. Their holy habit reminds them of their obligations in this regard, for it is the garb of the servants of Christ. To Him they render service, when for His sake they obey their religious Superiors.

Happy are religious who practise detachment

from everything that is a drawback to compliance with the duties of their vocation. This may be trying to flesh and blood, but it will foster religiousness, and prepare the way for spiritual satisfactions, and for true freedom of the spirit ; for every inordinate attachment becomes in some way a fetter to the soul and an impediment to interior peace.

22. Silence.

Among the practices which distinguish religious from persons in the world is that of silence. In most Institutes there is the union of the active life with the contemplative life. Religious serve God not only by exterior works, but also by prayer, silence, and interior recollectedness. In religious houses, therefore, except at prescribed times when conversation is permitted, silence is universally enjoined. Seeing that this practice is common to all religious Orders and Institutes, we must conclude that there must be special reasons for its prescription.

We may say that silence is a great help to sanctification, because it conduces to recollection, to observance, to order, and to spiritual progress. We will, however, confine ourselves to two considerations—namely, that silence is beneficial (*a*) to the spiritual well-being of religious, and (*b*) to exterior religious observance.

(*a*) The active life of religious is represented by Martha, who ministered to our Lord's wants ; while their interior life finds its representation in Mary, who pleased our Lord by resting silently at his feet,

relishing His discourses—and this was declared by Him to be 'the best part.' Religious must not devote all their energies to exterior works; they must not neglect silence, recollection, and meditation, thus recommended by our Lord. Their spiritual well-being will not be benefited by dissipating conversations, by curious inquiring as to what is going on, by hearing and narrating useless stories, by discussing a neighbour's faultiness, by discoursing at all times upon worldly topics, or by the noise of constant speaking. This, however, would most likely occur, if silence were not enjoined and observed. History records how often, when men and women sought the path of a more perfect life, they departed from the ways of the world, and retired, some into solitary places, and others into monasteries where study and labour were pursued with silence and with the cultivation of the interior spirit. We find, too, that Founders of religious Orders and Institutes have always insisted upon the practice of silence.

Silence is beneficial to the soul, because it demands mortification of the senses, especially of the tongue and of the ears. The senses are the avenues through which various forms of evil and of distraction enter the soul; and when evil in any form gains access, it acts like an enemy and a robber. It begins at once to rifle the soul's spiritual treasures. Solomon says: 'He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul: but he that hath no guard on his speech shall meet with evils' (Prov. xiii. 3). How many, alas! are the sins by the tongue, which St. James describes as 'a world of iniquity' (iii. 6)! Who are those who do not

offend in some manner by the tongue? The apostle says: 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man' (iii. 2). By their words men often shock and disedify their neighbour; they often injure his good name; and they cause their neighbour to offend, together with themselves, by leading him to say what should not be said. Therefore does St. James say: 'The tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison' (iii. 8). Silence is a safeguard against all sins of the tongue.

Silence is beneficial to our souls, because it saves us from disturbance and distraction, and conduces to interior recollection. It is with the soul, as with Israel, when God said by His prophet: 'I will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart' (Osee ii. 14). God speaks more readily to the soul that is listening and attentive to His voice than to one that is occupied with what men have to say, or to one that distracts itself with idle and useless conversations.

When there is silence, religious can more frequently and more piously purify their intention, entertain themselves with devout thoughts, and raise their mind in prayer. Religious silence, moreover, conduces to devotion, and it helps to fit the soul for the spiritual exercises, for the holy Mass, and for receiving the sacraments piously and profitably. For these reasons, then, we are convinced that silence tends to promote spiritual progress.

(*b*) We have now to consider how silence is a help to exterior religiousness. Exterior religiousness consists in proper order and decorum, in devotedness to

appointed duties, and in fidelity to the observances enjoined by the rule. It may be said that silence well observed in a community betokens the religiousness of its members.

Without silence the religious house would lose its special character, and the cell would be only as a room in any other kind of house. Without silence, too, there would be a certain amount of noise and distracting bustle to disturb the peace and order of the community. Even in many secular employments talking is discouraged, if not actually prohibited; and the reason is that when silence is observed, the work is more easily arranged and more perfectly accomplished.

Silence helps to fix the attention of religious upon the duties marked out for them, and it saves them from interruption, distraction, and interference. With silence, too, there will be fewer misunderstandings and more perfect union in community life.

These advantages of silence need not be dwelt on. By the observance of silence, confusion, noise, and disorder will be avoided, and a quiet and peaceful regularity will be maintained.

Religious should value this observance, and should strive to maintain and promote it. Solomon says that there is 'a time to keep silence and a time to speak' (Eccles. iii. 7). What love of rule and of self-restraint do religious manifest who speak whenever it pleases them at times when silence should be observed, and who thus cause others to offend against this salutary observance? Do they reflect

upon the disedification they may thus give? What profit to themselves results from their breach of silence? Would not the faithful observance of silence be more profitable?

Religious who have a zeal for silence will also be particular in other points of observance, and they will experience as a reward interior peace. They will be noted for their exterior composure. When, during the time marked for silence, any necessity for speaking occurs, they will use a low tone of voice, so as to show their respect for silence, and so as to cause as little disturbance as possible.

To all religious the house of the Holy Family at Nazareth should serve as a model. They should reflect on the silence, recollection, and spirit of retirement and prayer practised by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and it should be their joy to live as nearly as possible in union with them and in imitation of their virtues and practices. Reckoning by the happy fruits of such meritorious imitation, they might then say that 'silence is golden.'

23. Meditation.

A most useful help in the spiritual life of religious is their daily meditation. It differs from vocal prayer particularly in this: that in meditation religious ponder leisurely over various pious subjects, and elicit freely such affections as these considerations suggest; whereas in vocal prayers both their ideas and their affections are put into fixed words and phrases. Meditation, therefore,

allows of more scope for reflection, and it inspires sentiments which are more spontaneous, and perhaps more genuine and practical, than sentiments suggested and expressed in set forms of vocal prayers composed by others. We will consider in what ways meditation is a special help, and it will be seen that its advantages are many.

1. What a holy and meritorious way meditation is of passing the time allotted to it every day! Religious withdraw themselves for this allotted time from other occupations in order to pray, and during it they commune with God and with their own soul. During it they open their mind to holy thoughts, while their hearts, too, elicit pious affections. During the time of meditation they do not seek earthly satisfactions or temporal gain. Their mind is not occupied with proud, envious, or other evil thoughts, nor do they plan what is foolish or vain. Their object in meditation is good, and only good, and the results of meditation are salutary and profitable. In meditation religious put before their minds not what is material or foolish, but what is spiritual and wise, and they seek to know God, His ways, His works, and His will better; they desire to understand their obligations more fully, to study the requirements of the Christian and religious virtues, and to correct their own faults. In a few words, they seek in meditation profitable knowledge, useful guidance, and salutary correction. How holy and meritorious a way, then, is this of spending their time!

2. Our second consideration is that meditation is

specially helpful to religious because of the subjects meditated upon. These subjects are for the most part, and rightly, the teachings conveyed by the works, life, and words of our Divine Saviour. These admirable teachings supply most useful and practical lessons, by which religious may give a right direction to their life, and may maintain an exemplary line of conduct in keeping with their holy vocation. They condemn irreligion and every form of vice, and at the same time they lift up the mind to higher things; they inflame the heart with a love of God and of virtue; they incite the soul to a constant pursuit of spiritual gain; they impart instruction as to the ways of God's dispensations and the demands of His will; and they brace up the spirit to endure trials, contradictions, and suffering for God's sake, and to take up the sweet yoke of Christ and to follow Him. These teachings, moreover, point out the necessity of grace, and the means of acquiring it and of preserving it; the evil of sin, and how to avoid it; and, finally, the great issues of life—namely, the everlasting reward awaiting God's faithful servants and the everlasting punishment reserved for impenitent sinners.

These are only some of the subjects upon which religious meditate as the outcome of the Gospel teaching. We cannot fail to see how useful they must be for their spiritual enlightenment and guidance, and to maintain them in fervour in their religious life. As a fruit, then, of their meditations, religious should become fashioned to holiness of life in the sense employed by St. Peter, where he says:

'Wherefore, having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ, as children of obedience, not fashioned according to the former desires of your ignorance; but according to Him that hath called you, Who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy' (1 St. Pet. i. 13-15).

3. This leads us to consider that it does not suffice that the mind be enlightened. Enlightenment is only the foundation of spiritual progress. (*a*) The heart must be moved, and (*b*) conduct must be regulated.

(*a*) When by assiduous reflection the mind has become imbued with the teachings conveyed by the subject of the meditation, religious must next proceed to raise their heart to God with feelings of worship, praise, and thanksgiving, and with a fervent desire of pleasing Him and of profiting by these teachings. They should admire the ways of God and the dealings of His love and mercy in their own regard; they should give expression to their love of our Lord, and their desire to be always true to Him, to learn of Him, and to profit by the means of sanctification which He has established. These and other such sentiments and affections will make their meditation a true act of prayer; and, combined with the reflections with which their meditation began, they will dispose religious to draw practical profit from the meditation.

(*b*) Having first raised their heart to God, and offered him their choicest affections, religious will

then proceed to turn their eyes upon themselves. They must examine and see what God asks of them. The practical profit to which I just referred will be in the wise regulation of their conduct. Religious next study what they themselves have to learn for their own guidance from the teachings conveyed by the subject of the meditation—what they should do and what they should correct; they will acknowledge with sorrow their faults and shortcomings, their carelessness and cowardice, and their weaknesses, folly, and presumption, according as they find the case to be.

Finally, they will pass on to make good resolutions as to amendment and as to more strenuous effort. They will generously determine to do whatever God and their holy vocation and their obligations demand of them. Then, as they admit that they can do nothing of themselves, they will conclude their meditation with fervent prayer for the graces they need. Here they may plead to the love of the Sacred Heart, and through our Lord's most precious wounds; and they may invoke the intercession of our Blessed Lady, of St. Joseph, and of their guardian angel and holy patrons.

In order to make their meditation well, religious should at the outset earnestly desire to make a good and profitable meditation; and then they should enter properly and in an orderly way into it; and they should bring to it an undivided attention.

Sometimes religious do not feel satisfied with their meditation. If they are at fault, let them try to do better next time. If they are not aware of any fault,

there may have been causes over which they had no control. There may have been mental or bodily fatigue, or some indisposition; or some trial may have been permitted by God; or again there may have been attempts on the part of Satan to spoil the meditation. Religious should take care not to allow any of these causes to dishearten them. Even if there be no perceptible profit there will not be any loss. Too much should not be expected. Let them be humble and patient. If religious only try to make their meditation well, it will bring them spiritual help, and it will afford their mind comfort and satisfaction.

24. Spiritual Reading.

Religious should wish ever to walk in the light, and not in darkness. As a rule, indeed, they have truer and more extensive spiritual knowledge than ordinary secular persons; and this may in great measure be accounted for by the lights they draw from meditation and spiritual reading. These religious exercises throw light upon the soul, and they are to religious a source of spiritual knowledge for their guidance.

We will consider (*a*) what we are to understand by spiritual reading, (*b*) the fruits we should draw from it, and (*c*) how we should make it.

(*a*) We ask ourselves, first, what we are to understand by spiritual reading.

By the religious exercise of spiritual reading, we understand spending a certain time advisedly in

reading some book treating of the duties of the Christian or religious life, of Christian virtues or practices, of the path to perfection or of the interior life, of religious truths and doctrines, of the lives and virtues of our Divine Lord, of His holy Mother, or of the Saints, or otherwise treating of spiritual subjects—and reading it with a view to our spiritual profit.

We therefore read books of this kind, not with a critical or curious mind or to enjoy the author's style or treatment of the subject, but chiefly with a mind open to receive instruction and edification. We read them to draw from them lessons and counsels for our soul's benefit and guidance, and to lay up for ourselves a store of spiritual knowledge.

These spiritual books are not the inspired word of God, as are the Sacred Scriptures, but they yet rank, together with preaching, as a medium through which the lessons of the inspired word reach our soul. The writers of spiritual works usually draw their ideas directly or indirectly from the Gospel lessons, from the lives, maxims, or writings of God's servants, or from other approved sources. As we should deem it a wise dispensation of God's Providence that there have been preserved in the Church the writings of so many learned and holy Doctors—writings conveying most useful truths—so too should we regard it as another beneficent arrangement of the same loving Providence that ascetical writers have in every age given to the faithful admirable works on spiritual subjects, useful in their doctrine and in the lessons they inculcate.

How rich, therefore, we are, both in the sources from which we may draw instruction, and in the abundant lessons contained in these sources!

I have said that spiritual writers are not inspired, and I may add a word of warning. It must be borne in mind that some spiritual books were written for special purposes, or for particular persons, and that therefore the treatment of the subject is adapted to those purposes and to those persons, and it may not commend itself to all, and perhaps in some cases not to us. Occasionally, too, there may be great exaggerations, and sometimes the teaching may not be conveyed in accurate terms. If, therefore, we should meet with anything that surprises us, we should pass it over and seek to turn to our profit only what we may. If, however, we wish to understand the matter that causes us surprise, we should consult some prudent and instructed person about it.

(*b*) We have now to consider some of the fruits to be derived from spiritual reading.

Religious do not make their spiritual reading for a pleasant pastime, but with a view to derive from it instruction and guidance. It should help to inform them concerning what they should know, and what they should do. We see this by taking up the well-known work of Father Rodriguez on 'Christian and Religious Perfection.' We find that it contains treatises on the virtues and practices which are expected in religious, and on various helps to perfection. If, however, we take up the Life of a Saint, we see in it how the principles of the holy

Faith, and the demands of a Christian life, are put in practice; they are revealed in the Life of the Saint as a model for our imitation. How instructive all this is!

Spiritual reading does not merely show us the light, and then leave us where we are. No; it tends also to strengthen and encourage us in doing good; it leads us on. It helps us to love religion and duty, and to correct our faultiness. The lessons we learn from it, the holy principles it inculcates, and the examples it sets before us, make a salutary impression upon us, and make us wish to persevere in the way of a good life and even to be better than we are.

Spiritual reading also affords us protection against false ideas and principles, and it puts us on our guard against delusions and temptations. In a word, then, we may say that it helps us to love God and to desire to please Him; it helps to give us a healthy and an instructed mind, and to draw us to piety; and it, moreover, helps us to correct our exterior conduct, and to direct our steps, with profit to ourselves and edification to our neighbour, on the safe and holy way leading to the heavenly kingdom. It is, then, a most valuable help to both interior and exterior religiousness.

(*c*) How, then, we now ask, should religious make their spiritual reading that it may be profitable to them? They should begin by prayer and by purifying their intention. What is spiritual should be spiritually done. Religious should strive always to give the full prescribed time to this exercise. Their spiritual reading, however, should not be made a

severe study. Sometimes it is made in public and sometimes in private. When it is made privately, religious should not hurry over it, but should read leisurely and thoughtfully. Occasionally they might read even a second time a passage that has impressed them. Religious should bear in mind that spiritual reading is one of their exercises of piety, and they should try to derive from it something for their spiritual benefit. They should not be satisfied with only admiring what they read; they should strive to draw lessons from it to apply them especially to themselves.

In performing this exercise, religious should not make sins out of their distractions or inattention. If any blame rests with them in the matter of these distractions, the loss they cause will be their own, but it will not involve the guilt of sin. They should regret their inattention, and strive to do better the next time they perform the exercise.

Religious who neglect spiritual reading will experience loss in many ways. They will be such as find time for everything else except for what is spiritually profitable. They will even, perhaps, devote without scruple to profane reading the precious time in which they should make their spiritual reading. They will become like seculars who never hear sermons—dry and unspiritual, mundane in their ideas, and wanting in piety.

Religious should love and appreciate spiritual reading; then will they make it well and profitably. In the lessons imparted by it, let them fancy that God is speaking to them, inviting them to

walk assiduously in the holy way of perfection, and let them open their ears and their hearts to learn what He has to say to them. Let them address Him submissively in the words of Samuel: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth' (1 Kings iii. 10).

25. The Presence of God.

Whether we will it or not, whether we seek to escape from Him or not, God is ever with us. He is more certainly and more constantly with us than the atmosphere in which we live, which ever surrounds us, and which is so necessary to our life. He is not with us as a shadow or figure, but in His own Eternal and Immense Reality and Essence. He is with us with all His Divine attributes and perfections, which are inseparable and indistinguishable from His One, Simple, and Absolute Being.

When we pray, when we labour, when we sorrow, when we plan and design, when we think, speak, or act, and when we do good or evil, God is with us. He is not just and only here or there, in one place and not in another, as though His presence could be fixed or circumscribed; but, with an all-pervading presence, He is always in every place, for His Divine Being is not confined by either time or place. In other words, God is eternal and immense, always and in all His Being everywhere. He is therefore always within us and about us, and just as truly ever near as afar off.

Let us consider how God's presence should affect us, and what it demands of us. We will see (1) that

it should console us, (2) that it should be remembered, and (3) that it should be respected.

1. God's presence with us should console us. To be alone and desolate takes away joy. Although all creatures may be absent, God is yet ever present. We need, therefore, never feel absolutely alone, for *He* is present Who is more to us than all creatures. This should be (*a*) a consoling, and (*b*) an inspiring thought.

(*a*) It should be a consoling thought, because our faith tells us what our relations with God are. We are not strangers to Him, nor beings for whom He has no care; we are His own creatures, brought into being for His own purposes—creatures, too, for whom He has created the whole universe, setting it in order that it may serve us. We are more: we are God's children, adopted through the Incarnation and Redemption of His own beloved Son, and sanctified by His own Divine Spirit. He has blessed us with countless gifts and favours, and He loves us with a love at once all-fatherly and Divine. Let us, then, peer out of our own nothingness, weakness, and misery, and see ever at hand, watching over us and loving us, protecting and blessing us, God Himself. He may, indeed, be seen in His works, but by faith we may also lift up the eyes of our soul to recognize His presence ever with us in the very Essence of His Divine Being.

(*b*) The thought of God's presence should be an inspiring one, because of the tenderness of His perpetual Providence, the wisdom of His dispensations, the bountifulness of His grace, the plenteousness of

His mercy, and the lovingness of His designs. *He* is at hand Who has all things and Who can do all things; and He is thus at hand, not to fill us with dread, not to crush us or do us harm, and not to make us miserable, but, on the contrary, to bless and protect us, to supply all our needs, to make us happy, and by His grace to lead us by holy and wise ways to His heavenly Kingdom.

We should, then, be inspired with sentiments of love, gratitude, trust, courage, and generosity. Let us say confidently with David: 'Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me' (Ps. xxii. 4). The presence, then, of God Who so loves us, Who bestows blessings upon us, and makes such provision for our welfare, and Who strengthens and protects us, ought to console us.

2. In the second place, the presence of God should be remembered. It is not enough that God is present. Many men never reflect that He is present, and they ignore His presence. This should not be so. The holy writer says: 'Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom, and that shall meditate in his justice, and in his mind shall think of the all-seeing eye of God' (Ecclus. xiv. 22).

Religious are taught to recall God's presence from time to time and to walk in it. There are certain times when they should recall it. These are, especially, when they are about to pray, and during their prayer; at fixed times, as when they hear the clock strike; when things go wrong with them; when obedience imposes upon them what is arduous

or disagreeable; at their rising or going to rest; and in time of temptation and sorrow.

Recalling God's presence will help to make us feel that we are not alone, helpless or forgotten. It will comfort us with the assurance that as we are God's servants, He will not abandon us; and it will lead us to pray according to our need, as St. Peter says: 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you' (1 St. Pet. v. 7).

When St. Thomas Aquinas was dying, someone asked him to suggest to him a means of living ever faithful to God's grace. The Saint answered, and these were his last words addressed to men: 'Be assured that he who shall always walk faithfully in His presence, always ready to give Him an account of all his actions, will never be separated from Him by consenting to sin.' Holy Job walked ever circumspectly, remembering God's presence. We read how he said: 'Doth not He consider my ways, and number all my steps?' (Job xxxi. 4). Religious should cultivate the practice of recalling God's presence by short ejaculatory prayers.

3. In the third place, God's presence should be respected. The restraint imposed upon us by the thought of His presence should not be a painful one, nor should it be a scrupulous or distressing one. We have seen what are our relations with God. These relations suggest respect, devotedness, filial awe, worshipful love, and whole-hearted confidence. Let us bring these feelings into our remembrance of God's presence.

There are many men who believe in God's

presence, but who do not respect it. The sinner pays no attention to it. 'There is no fear of God before his eyes' (Ps. xxxv. 2). Sin is committed on God's own domain and under His very eye. Fewer sins would be committed if men only thought seriously of God's presence, and particularly if they considered that He was present to punish them. His presence is disregarded by all who fail to call upon Him in their difficulties, needs, and temptations. It is but tardily recognized, when men turn to God not at first, but only as a last resource. Yet what can they do without Him? Do not all things come from Him? As Job said: 'With Him is wisdom and strength, He hath counsel and understanding. If He pull down, there is no man that can build up: if He shut up a man, there is none that can open. . . . He multiplieth nations and destroyeth them, and restoreth them again after they were overthrown' (Job xii. 13, 14, 23). Let us not think that only in heaven need the holiness of God's presence be acknowledged and respected; for God is ever with us, ever claiming our worship, love and obedience—'All the earth is full of His glory' (Isa. vi. 3).

Happy are religious who ever walk in God's presence. This holy practice will help to keep them right in their intentions, in their discourses, in their whole conduct, and in their thoughts and desires. David said: 'I set the Lord always in my sight: for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced' (Ps. xv. 8, 9).

Religious who have consecrated themselves to

God, and whose life belongs to Him, should be happy to remember that their Lord and Master is ever at hand to receive their service, to supply their needs, and to bless their works. Let them remember that He is present, too, when they disregard their rules, and when in other ways they fail in the obligations of their holy calling. They cannot escape His all-seeing eye. Let them count as addressed to themselves God's words to Abraham: 'Walk before Me, and be perfect' (Gen. xvii. 1); and let them strive in all their conduct to be dutiful. It should be to them a joy, as it would be a practical help, to give utterance from time to time to pious ejaculations by which they would call to mind God's presence, and secure His aid. The practice would be fruitful in spiritual comfort and encouragement, and would tend to preserve them from all faultiness.

26. Love of Prayer.

The life of persons consecrated to God may be described as one of prayer and holy duties. Prayer sanctifies the duties imposed upon religious, and it is itself one of the principal duties of their state. They should be happy in having to be so often engaged in various exercises of devotion. This demands in them a love of prayer, without which they will find these exercises tedious and unpalatable.

Love of prayer may be reckoned one of the graces that accompany the religious vocation. It is a grace that should be valued, fostered, and cultivated. Religious should therefore apply themselves dili-

gently to their exercises of piety, and endeavour to perform them whole-heartedly, and with relish and devotion. To do this, is to cultivate a love of prayer, and to make prayer a valuable help to a truly religious life.

We will consider that where a love of prayer is wanting, there will be (*a*) disrelish for the exercises of piety, (*b*) a superficial performance of them, (*c*) a love of things less profitable, and (*d*) a dissipated mind.

(*a*) Not to have a relish for prayer, is almost the same as to have a disrelish for it. Religious should, assuredly, love what tends in an important degree to advance them on the way towards the perfection of their state. Prayer certainly does this; for it brings them the graces they need in their daily life, and it helps to nourish a spirit of union with God. By prayer they sanctify their works. Prayer, moreover, affords them consolation in their trials and sufferings. Without such benefits as these proceeding from prayer, religious might feel as if God had abandoned them. Strengthened by the graces it brings, they are enabled to fulfil the holy obligations of their state. How would matters be, if religious were to neglect prayer and their spiritual exercises? or to perform them without profit?

All who, like religious, aim at a spiritual life, need special spiritual support. If this be wanting, they will feel a sense of unsatisfactoriness, for nothing else can supply the need. When religious have no relish for prayer, how can it be expected that they will be happy in having to spend so much of their time in exercises of piety? Such religious will go to them

if not altogether unwillingly, at any rate with but little interest, and as a consequence, they will derive but little spiritual fruit from them. Owing to disrelish for prayer, these religious may often omit some of their pious exercises, or they may shorten them, and they will usually be glad when they are over. Some undevout religious, who never find the recreations long enough, find the exercises of piety too long, and they leave the chapel as speedily as they can.

How different is the conduct of religious who love prayer! for these are pleased when the time for the exercises of piety arrives, and they go to them with a happy mind and pious disposition. Thus is their soul prepared for the holy fruits to be derived from them.

(*b*) When a relish for prayer is wanting, the exercises of piety will be performed in a routinary, perfunctory manner. There will therefore be scarcely more than a bodily presence at them, and a superficial performance of them.

A plant will not thrive when the sap is wanting. Now, devotion is the sap of the spiritual exercises; and when it is wanting, religious will have wandering thoughts and their utterances in prayer will not have all their true meaning. This, however, is very different from that dryness in prayer with which God sometimes tries His servants. In dryness the spirit of true prayer is still present, and rich fruits of prayer will not be wanting. It does not proceed from disrelish for prayer, or from other faultiness; but it arises sometimes from indisposition

of body or from excessive occupation or fatigue; or, again, it may be permitted by a special dispensation of Providence. It is even held that prayer made under a condition of spiritual dryness of this kind may be of greater profit to the soul than when made with sensible devotion.

It was never intended that only a bodily presence at the exercises of piety should satisfy the obligation imposed by the rule; for the rule looks to the fervour and spiritual welfare of the members of the Institute.

(*c*) When a love of prayer is wanting, it will be found that religious have set their affections upon other things—things less profitable, if not hurtful. They must not serve God with divided affections.

Prayer is one of the means by which religious should purify their affections, and keep them rightly balanced amidst the attractions and distractions to which they may be exposed. But if fervent prayer be wanting then may their wayward hearts be drawn away inordinately after creatures.

A love of prayer is one of the clearest proofs of our love of God. What, then, must be said when religious have no relish for prayer? Must there not be something wrong in the character of their affections? Is there a faulty self-love, or inordinate love of creatures? St. Paul says: 'The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 14); and 'They that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit' (Rom. viii. 5).

Religious who love prayer are very impressionable in all that regards God's love and service, and very watchful over their hearts lest they be unduly carried away by the love of creatures. A prayerful spirit is a check and safeguard against the waywardness of the will, and against all inordinate affections.

(*d*) Lastly, when religious have no relish for prayer, it may be suspected that they have a dissipated mind. Such religious are strangers to interior recollection. They are ever on the watch for news, and are eager to know their neighbour's business; they take great interest in mere trifles, and they are willing to distract themselves with every passing bubble. All this does not afford them more than a brief satisfaction. In fact, all this becomes their punishment, for it may truly be said that a dissipated mind is its own punishment. Dissipation of spirit may lead to various kinds of sin; while, on the other hand, a prayerful spirit will be a great help to silence, retirement, and recollection—practices that are a shield against evil, and that bring peace to the soul. What a contrast, then, there is between the mind of religious who love prayer and that of those who have no relish for it!

Religious should weigh well the consequences of a disrelish for prayer, and seek ever to love prayer, and to perform piously their spiritual exercises. By means of these valuable helps, many holy religious who have gone before them sanctified their lives and won their heavenly reward. A love of prayer will make religious happy in their state of life, and it will draw their hearts to God. It is written:

'Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens' (Lam. iii. 41)—that is, not our hands only, but our hearts also, by the affection and devotion which inspire and animate our prayer, to make it acceptable to God. Religious who love prayer will have the true spirit of prayer and their life will have about it the fragrance of piety.

27. Humility of Mind.

Humility is a virtue indispensable to religion (taken in a broad sense), and most necessary to the religious life. It is a virtue which our Lord would have all His followers to learn from Himself. He said: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart' (St. Matt. xi. 29). Humility has indeed its exterior manifestation, but its seat is in the mind and heart. Men who fancy that they are humble, because they make profession of being so, only deceive themselves if in reality they are not humble of mind.

This virtue should be deeply seated in the hearts of all religious—both of Superiors and of subjects. A good Superior will be a humble one, and a good subject also will be a humble one. Let us consider some reasons why we should be humble of mind: and we will see that we should be so, (*a*) because this disposition of mind is pleasing to God, (*b*) be cause of its spiritual benefit, (*c*) because of what we are, (*d*) because of our condition of dependence, and (*e*) because of our faultiness.

(*a*) The Holy Scriptures, in many places, teach us

how hateful to God is pride, and how pleasing to Him is humility. The lessons they contain and repeat so often should be deeply impressed upon our mind. From them we learn that God would even leave us in ignorance of our actual spiritual condition, lest we should pride ourselves on His gifts. He says by Solomon : 'Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred' (Eccles. ix. 1). The Holy Scriptures by various examples show us how when God would accomplish any great work He employs the humble as His agents or ministers. This, too, is what St. Paul points out when he says: 'The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise. . . . That no flesh should glory in His sight' (1 Cor. i. 27, 29). David says: 'He will save the humble of spirit' (Ps. xxxiii. 19). St. Peter urges all to be humble, saying: 'Do ye all insinuate humility one to another, for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace' (1 St. Pet. v. 5). In reading of the Saints, we note that humility is perhaps the chief of their distinguishing virtues. This does not surprise us, when we call to mind our Lord's assurance that the humble shall be exalted. This admirable virtue was eminent in the most holy Virgin who was created by God to be the mother of His own Divine Son—that Mother, who said of herself: 'He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid' (St. Luke i. 48).

Pride would rob God of some of His glory, and it has ever been detestable in His eyes. Our Lord's whole teaching and example condemned pride. 'He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death'

(Phil. ii 8). When on earth, He loved little children, because they were simple and humble; and He told His followers that, if they would enter Heaven, they should become even as little ones. It is, then, convincingly evident that humility of mind and heart is pleasing to God, and that His favours are for the humble. How, then, can religious pretend to belong in a special way to God, and to be faithful followers of Christ, if they do not strive to be humble?

(*b*) In the second place, religious should aim at humility of mind because of its spiritual fruits.

Humility is closely allied with Justice. It is a virtue which holds us in our proper place. It leads us not to wish to be deemed more excellent than we actually are, or to be more than God wishes us to be. Humility will also prove to us of signal spiritual benefit, if while not thinking ourselves more than we are, we dutifully attribute all excellence to God. Humility will lead us to do this; and it will inspire us with great reverence for God.

A true sense of humility will make us constant and earnest in praying for grace. If we be truly humble, we shall not pray in vain: 'To the humble He giveth grace.' Humility both disposes the soul for grace and assists it in co-operating with it; for it leads the soul to acknowledge two things—namely, first, the bountifulness of God in bestowing grace; and secondly, the soul's absolute need of grace for its sanctification, spiritual strength, and salvation, and its entire dependence on God for it.

Another spiritual benefit arising from humility is

that it is a corrective of pride of intellect, and that it is often rewarded by interior light and spiritual discernment. Our Lord, addressing His heavenly Father, said: 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones' (St. Matt. xi. 25). Humility is necessary as a disposition for an enlightened faith, for receiving the holy sacraments devoutly, and for praying with profit. We read in the Psalms: 'He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble: and He hath not despised their petition' (Ps. ci. 18); and in Ecclesiasticus: 'The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds' (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). We must conclude from these considerations that many spiritual benefits will be experienced by the truly humble.

(*c*) In the third place, the consideration of what we are should keep us humble. What should we say of our character and condition? On what have we reason to pride ourselves? We have to acknowledge that we are children of a fallen race, devoid of any merit of our own, and subject to many imperfections. Of ourselves we are base and weak, and inclined to evil, often yielding to what is sinful. Our life is full of miseries, and it will come to its close in death. The holy writer asks: 'Why is earth and ashes proud?' (Ecclus. x. 9). If it were not for our Divine Redeemer we should be hopelessly children of reprobation. When we think of all this, how can we, with any show of justice, raise our heads and walk with head erect, as if of ourselves alone we had any honour or sufficiency? Should we not rather walk

ever in humility, and seek assiduously to cultivate a virtue so necessary to us?

(*d*) The study of our condition should, in the fourth place, persuade us of the necessity of humility because of our entire dependence upon God for everything. St. Paul says: 'Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor. iii. 5). Not only for what is exquisite, but even for the commonest necessaries of life—for both temporal and spiritual aid—we depend upon God. Therefore are we instructed to pray for our daily bread; and therefore, too, must we look to God for every grace by which we may hope to attain to eternal life. On our part we must co-operate with grace, and God helps us to do this. Our poverty and helplessness, when left to ourselves, should keep us humble. Our talents, moreover, come to us from God; and, apart from whatever merit may be apportioned to us, to Him belongs the glory of any benefit resulting from our good use of them. Let us humbly and gratefully acknowledge that if we are good, clever, successful in life, or blessed with temporal goods, it is all by the Divine favour, bounty, and aid. St. Paul says: 'What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (1 Cor. iv. 7). Our condition of dependence should therefore keep us humble in mind.

(*e*) Finally, we should ever be humble because of our faultiness. This comes of moral weakness and of perversity, therefore of undutifulness to God

whether in a lesser or greater degree. To be discovered doing wrong brings a blush of shame to the cheek. Even when our wrong-doing has not this effect, there will be an interior sense of faultiness which should humble the mind. In the case of religious, the faultiness, if serious, may perhaps rightly be termed a perversity of a special stamp of unfaithfulness and ingratitude—of unfaithfulness because of the special character of their relations to God ; and of ingratitude, because of their special indebtedness to God for so many particular favours, and for the blessings of a more particular providence. If religious feel that their faults lay them open to these charges, they certainly have special reasons for humility and confusion. The sense of confusion under these circumstances comes as a grace to reproach the soul, and move it to effort at amendment. When, as is usually the case, religious are not guilty of any serious faults, but have ever to accuse themselves of the same lesser ones, they should see in this also reason for self-abasement and humility of mind.

The fruits of interior humility will be many and precious. It may be practised with or without special occasion ; for at any time we may make sincere acts of humility. We may also at any time find ample reason for humbling ourselves interiorly, by reflecting upon our nothingness, our dependence, our weakness, our misery, and our faultiness. Such reflections would be an antidote against our natural pride and self-sufficiency. Religious should often pray for the grace to be truly humble, so that they

may thereby become more pleasing to God and more solid in other virtues.

28. Humility in Action.

Just as haughtiness and self-conceit have their exterior expression in the countenance and airs of a man, and in his words, manner, and action, so also has the admirable virtue of humility its outward manifestation in similar ways in men's conduct. Although this virtue has its seat in the mind and heart it must have also its exterior expression.

The humble habit worn by religious betokens the simple, unworldly, and humble character of those who wear it; and their conduct should be in keeping with this badge of religious poverty, unworldliness, and submission, which ever speaks to them of their consecration to God. Religious should practise humility exteriorly (*a*) by their look and manner, (*b*) by their words and conversation, and (*c*) by their way of acting.

(*a*) It is laid down that we are not always to judge by appearances. While this is so, we must yet be careful not to give disedification or pain by outward appearances. We must therefore be careful not to give ourselves airs as showing that we deem ourselves superior to others, or that we contemn others. A great deal of significance may be conveyed by look, sneer, smile, or toss of the head. In these ways we may express either disdain or complacence, indifference or interest, a desire to hurt another's feelings or a wish to please or

conciliate others. Our looks and airs should be regulated and controlled by charity and humility. Charity will prevent our wounding others in these ways; while humility will lead us to show that we do not pretend to be so exalted as to refuse them the respect and consideration to which they are entitled.

How contrary to humility are those looks, and expressions by manner, which seem to convey such meanings as the following: 'How do you presume to speak to me?' 'What right have you to express an opinion?' 'You are beneath my notice.' 'I do not heed what you are saying, because I have no regard for your opinion.' What a false sense of superiority, and what disdain such silent messages convey! Let us hope that religious are too well grounded in humility to give expression by their countenance or manner to such messages. Let us hope that they rather study to express by these means their humble opinion of themselves, and a willingness to show every due consideration for their neighbour, and especially for members of their own community.

(*b*) Perhaps humility is more sinned against by the speech than by look or manner. We may offend against this virtue by too much speaking, also by the tone of voice in which we speak, and again, by what we say of ourselves or of others.

It would be contrary to humility to put ourselves forward by speaking much. There are some persons who are so forward as to strive to monopolize conversation, and who seem to like to hear their own voice. Such persons are not always willing to hear

the opinions of others. The case is worse when they manifest conceit of their superior judgment—be it real or supposed. It is also contrary to humility, to speak unnecessarily in a loud tone of voice, as though betokening one's importance, and to resent respectful interruptions. We should never speak in a haughty manner, but always with consideration for others, be they even in any respect our inferiors. Nor should we speak with a view of showing our learning, or superior knowledge. It would be contrary both to charity and to humility, to speak in a provoking tone, even when there is a reasonable argument.

Let us now come to see how we should offend against humility in speaking (1) of ourselves, and (2) of our neighbour.

1. Humility requires that we should, as far as possible, refrain from speaking of ourselves, or of the superior position of our family, for there is usually a danger of pride and self-conceit in doing so. Especially should we avoid alluding unnecessarily to any good we may have done, or any success we may have attained, or to anything that would show our talents or the good points in our character. There may indeed be occasions when these things may rightly be spoken of, but in any such case, avoiding all boasting and exaggeration, we must repress self-satisfaction and a craving for praise. Always remembering that all good comes from God, to Whom all the glory should be referred, we should ever speak modestly of ourselves, and of our performances. And while doing this we might even add

that anyone else under similar circumstances would have done the same thing equally well, or even better.

This modest way of speaking of good done is not, alas! always met with. Too much effort is often made to point out one's own pretended excellence, and often, too, the good done is exaggerated. Speaking of ourselves with the sole idea of obtaining praise and admiration, or, again, boasting of our talents or achievements, would manifest an absence of true humility. In many cases, while committing such faults against humility, we should also offend against justice by taking too much credit to ourselves, or by exaggerating the good we have done, and by robbing God of the glory which belongs to Him.

2. We offend against humility in speaking of our neighbour, when we assume a tone of superiority, or make unfavourable comparisons painful to him, or seek to put him down, or scorn his views or advice. We may also offend against our neighbour and against humility, when we speak in too patronizing a tone, or when we give rise to resentment by making remarks that reflect on our neighbour's good sense. A true sense of humility will prevent us from expressing ourselves in any of these ways, even when there may be some reason for seeing faults in our neighbour's views, arguments, or conduct. We should evidently fail in humility, if we were to speak disdainfully of our neighbour, or disparagingly of his character, in order to depreciate him in the eyes of others, or to cause them to think more highly

of ourselves. Humility, as well as charity, would dictate silence, rather than such manner of speech as this.

(*c*) Finally, we should offend against humility in behaviour if we were to act rudely towards our neighbour, as though disallowing his title to our respect; if, when in company, we were designedly to leave him unnoticed, and to put ourselves forward, and seek to make much of ourselves: or if we were to do in his presence what we would not think of doing before our superiors or equals. In the case of religious, it would be opposed to both humility and charity if they were to claim the best of everything for themselves, as deeming themselves superior to other members of the community. They would also fail in humility in action, if through self-esteem or a vain ambition they were to strive for the higher posts in their community. Our Lord teaches us to desire the lowest place (St. Luke xiv. 10), and not to be ministered unto, but to minister (St. Matt. xx. 28). Humility would teach us to strive to help others, and, as occasion occurs, to show them respect and consideration.

Humility in all these ways—by look, manner, speech, and action—will not be a striking feature in the life of religious without the help of grace. Religious should keep before their minds the admirable example of our Divine Lord—'Learn of me,' He said—and of His holy Mother and St. Joseph, reflecting upon how dear this virtue is to the Sacred Heart. There will not be any solid advancement in religious perfection without it. It has a fragrance of its own

among all the virtues. It blooms almost unseen; but no spiritual garden can be without it. When it is absent there will not be any true solidity and constancy in the other virtues. It will be useful to say often, 'Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart;' and to meditate often upon the necessity of humility.

29. Piety—its Advantages.

Religious, when they as secular persons left the world to consecrate their life to God in religion, performed an act of piety of a very high order. It was not their first act of piety, for many others led up to it; and it was not to be their last, for many others followed it. There is an animating spirit which should guide, promote, sustain, and bring to perfection a religious life—namely, the spirit of piety. Without it, much will be wanting to the perfection of the religious life, and to the happiness and satisfaction which this life should yield to those who embrace it.

We may describe piety, as we are now considering it, as fervour in God's service, built up on the foundation of a lively faith, and accompanied by great confidence in God. Let us view it, as thus described, in the person of devout religious.

Religious who are animated with this spirit of sincere piety strive earnestly to avoid every kind of sin, and they whole-heartedly direct their entire life to God, Whom they rightly regard as their first beginning and last end. They feel an attraction to

prayer, to the holy sacraments, and to the public service of the Church as well as to private acts of devotion. Moreover, they love their vocation, and they seek to be faithful both to its spirit and to its observances. From this exemplification of what piety is in a religious, it ought to be seen how necessary this spirit is to the perfection of religious life.

How wisely, then, is it not arranged that in the first steps in the religious life special attention should be given to training in piety? Early formation to the ways of piety is very desirable, because early impressions are likely to endure, and because mind and heart are more impressionable in the case of the young than in that of persons more advanced in years.

We see how advantageous piety is when we consider how it helps the soul (*a*) in every stage of life, (*b*) in every calling, (*c*) in every difficulty, and (*d*) in every temptation.

(*a*) Piety is helpful to the soul in every stage of life. It helps us in youth, in our maturer years, and in our old age. In youth, before we experience the worst and hardest of the trials of life, when our budding nature is developing in an atmosphere of buoyancy, freshness, and confidence, piety leads us in the right paths of religion, and teaches us to love virtue. It trains us, moreover, to the needed discipline of submission, and guards us against evil influences. In maturer years, when we are face to face with the realities of life, and tossed about upon its stormy billows, piety bids us cling to God in every

difficulty and emergency, and directs us in the use of the means of grace. It suggests to us, moreover, discretion in conduct, a wise use of our temporal advantages, and a strict avoidance of all baneful attractions and influences. Finally, in our old age, when the pressure of worldly cares is somewhat relaxed, and when we are drawing near the horizon of life, piety helps to sustain our spiritual ardour, to prepare us to lay down the burden of life, and to inspire us with calm patience under our increasing infirmities, and with trust in God's mercy and in the loving nature of His dispensations for the future.

(*b*) Piety is a help in every calling. To religious, whose lives are consecrated to God and who are occupied with so many good works, piety must be the sustaining force. They should ever be actuated by pious motives, and in all their works they should be sustained by prayer. Religious, moreover, should edify one another by pious observance and devout behaviour; and they must persevere even to the end of their life under the holy discipline of the religious life. How shall they do all this without piety? In every state of life piety sustains dutifulness, and tends to edification.

If certain religious whose faulty conduct creates difficulties for themselves and for their Superiors were only animated with an earnest spirit of piety, how different the case would be! Instead of their being restricted in their employment, and even being perhaps relegated to houses where they may do less harm, they would rank among the useful observant religious whose talents and services are ever at the

disposal of their Superiors, and who may be employed anywhere without fear of their giving disedification.

(*c*) Life is encompassed with difficulties, and in them men need support and relief. How often, however, men wanting in piety rely upon their own efforts, and fail to implore God's help in season, if at all! Perhaps they murmur and complain. The lessons of our Lord's life and sufferings, and of the trials of the Saints, seem lost upon them. How different is the case of these persons from that of pious Christians who turn confidently to God under all their difficulties! These pray to God, and they await patiently the time when He shall see well to send them relief. Holy David says: 'Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them' (Ps. xxxiii. 20). Religious, like others, must have their experience of trials. Piety leads them to submit themselves dutifully to God's appointments, and endows them with a spirit of patience. They say: 'This is God's will. We must leave ourselves in God's hands, for He knows what is best for us.' Grace comes to their aid, and they do not lose their peace of mind. Patience and resignation bring their reward; for, in due time, God sends relief.

(*d*) Piety, finally, is a great help to the soul in time of temptation. It leads the soul to shelter itself under God's protection, and to plead fervently and continually for relief. Piety removes and corrects false alarms and misgivings concerning conduct in time of temptation; for it answers the inquiring conscience that on no account would the

soul give willing consent. Piety also comforts the soul with the thought that God is with it, and that He will not permit it to be overcome. When religious are not pious, temptations take away peace of mind, and often these religious fear that they may not have offered the needed resistance.

Let us, I say in conclusion, look upon piety as a powerful means of preserving ourselves from sin; for it inspires us with a salutary dread of evil. And let us also regard it as the seed of virtue; for it tends to plant and nourish all good desires. Walking, then, in the bright light of the example of the Saints, let us strive to cultivate this heavenly gift of piety. Let us ask it of the Holy Spirit of God, and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

30. Regularity.

Order should reign in every religious Institute, and in every religious community There should therefore be in every community the discipline of regularity; and to this useful and meritorious discipline all the members should submit themselves dutifully and constantly. Then will disorder and inconvenience be avoided, and good order will reign not only in the community as a whole, but also in the life of every one of its members.

We should recognize the importance of regularity. (*a*) There should be regularity in the arrangements for the government, and carrying on of the duties of the community, and of its works. (*b*) There should be regularity in the hours of community life, and of

the various exercises. (*c*) And there should be conformity in dress, diet, and furnishing. We will consider how important the discipline of regularity is in these various respects.

(*a*) The right government of a community supposes that its government shall be carried on, not according to the whim and fancy of those in charge, but according to well-defined rules and arrangements. The well-being of the community, the success of its works, and the reasonable contentment of its members, are matters which have to be provided for. The Church very wisely does not approve of autocracy in the government of religious Institutes. Power that is both supreme and independent is not vested in any Superior. Only a reasonable power, one given 'unto edification, and not unto destruction' (2 Cor. xiii. 10), is vested in religious Superiors. They have to rule for the benefit of the community and of all its subjects, in the spirit, as well as by the letter of the constitutions of the Institute, and according to the general rules which regulate religious life. Superiors do very wrong when they recognize no laws regulating and limiting their authority, and when they abuse their power in requiring subjects to do what they themselves as Superiors have no right to exact. Furthermore, those in charge have the chief duty of providing for, and enforcing, regularity. In the first place, then, they should themselves be exact in regularity; secondly, they should not, without sufficient reason, disturb the usual order of things in the community life and regulations; and thirdly,

they should watch over observance on the part of their subjects.

Other members of the community who have special charges should act according to the same rule and in the same spirit as Superiors, due allowance, however, being made for the difference of authority and position. A selfish or inconsiderate spirit should not actuate those who have charge in any capacity in a community. Members holding any office, or exercising any authority, should consult the common good, and should fulfil their duties in a regular manner—in other words, with regularity. This will not inconvenience or annoy others, and it will tend to good order, and to the success of whatever is in hand for accomplishment by the members of the community.

(*b*) In the second place, there should be regularity in the hours of community life, and of the various exercises. The necessity of this is recognized in every religious Institute; therefore is there a fixed horarium, which marks the hours for rising and for retiring, for prayer and for work, for meals and for recreation. It may be said that observance and punctuality are a criterion of the fervour of a community.

Opposed to regularity is independent action on the part of members of the community, members consulting only their own liking and convenience, without regard to others. Opposed to it, too, is individualism which, actuated by personal motives and self-seeking, manifests a want of religious bond among the members of the community. With

them it should be, with reasonable allowance however for the dissimilarity of the subjects of the comparison, as with a railway train: the locomotive and the carriages all move on the same lines, with the same speed, and in the same direction. Opposed also to regularity is disorder in carrying out what has to be done, and in doing it in an ill-tempered and unbecoming manner, likely to upset the evenness of religious discipline.

Want of regularity sometimes signifies opposition to properly constituted authority; and it may indicate the absence of a right understanding of duty, and of what the religious life demands. It is painful to note cases in which religious, failing lamentably in duty and in the religious spirit, are purposely wanting in regularity and punctuality, in order to cause annoyance to Superiors, or as a show of temper after receiving a correction, or again through a most unreasonable determination to resent and disregard the demands of religious discipline.

Every member of a community should strive to be punctual. The bell that calls to any exercise should be regarded as an indication of our Lord's invitation, if not of His command. If, when they hear the sound of the bell, religious say to themselves: 'Our Lord wishes me to go to this spiritual exercise, to this meal, to this duty, to this recreation'—how readily ought they not to answer the bell? Not only would this practice help to make them punctual, but then, moreover, would their obedience be sanctified by the holy motive of pleasing and obeying our Lord Himself.

(*c*) Finally, there should be conformity in dress, diet, and furniture. In these matters exceptions and distinctions should be avoided; for they are likely to cause jealousies, discontent, dislike, and murmuring.

Where one cell is the same as another, one religious habit the same as another, and the food of one religious the same as that of another, it will be evident to all that there are no preferences and no distinctions; and this will tend to harmony and union in community life. How distressing it is to hear religious complain, saying: 'Why have these particular religious certain advantages and better things than the rest of us? Are we not all of equal standing in the eyes of the Institute? And have we not all the same rights?' Superiors should be careful not to give rise to any reasonable complaints about such matters; and subjects should not, without necessity or grave cause, demand exceptional treatment. If there be in the members of a community a true spirit of poverty, self-denial, humility, and charity, then will there also be a willingness to submit to conformity in what regards clothing, diet, and furniture.

It is matters of detail, such as those imposed by the duty of being regular and punctual, that disclose the measure of religious devotedness; and their value should be judged by their relation to the order, happiness, and perfection of religious life. To disregard these matters is particularly faulty when it amounts to contempt for them. This disregard is sometimes accounted for as springing from large-

mindedness; but on examination it may be found to result from unwillingness to submit to inconvenience or to control, and therefore from a want of the true spirit of self-sacrifice and of religious devotedness.

31. Minding Small Things.

In their fidelity to the duties of their holy calling, religious should carry it even to what may appear small; for just as the small stones of an edifice have their place in it, and have their relative value, so is it also in the building of our sanctification. Everything does not depend upon the greater works; we must not neglect those that are less. Our Lord said: 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater' (St. Luke xvi. 10).

Let it not be said that religious who are exact in small observances thereby display scrupulosity or littleness of character. To think or say so would be unjust towards those who—if their conduct were properly understood, and if their real motives were seen—should be judged very differently.

Let us consider that religious who are careful in small observances give token (*a*) of a perfect obedience, (*b*) of earnest devotedness, (*c*) of a wise forethought, and (*d*) of fidelity in greater things.

(*a*) Religious who mind small things, and who carry their obedience so far as to do exactly even the lesser things that are commanded, deserve to be reckoned as lovers of obedience. Like less observant

religious, they might easily, though not rightly, confine their obedience to satisfying only the more serious requirements of their state of life; but they say to themselves: 'These are not all the things that are commanded: and obedience requires the doing of all that is commanded.' They see that there would be a failure in obedience, if they contented themselves with doing only part of what is commanded.

Perfect obedience does not confine itself to the fulfilment of grave commands; for its merit is not calculated altogether by the character of what is done, but by the spirit of faithful obedience with which it is done. Therefore does it seek to accomplish even the least things that are commanded, and in doing these, obedience may even be as perfect and as meritorious as in doing what is in itself of greater importance. Moreover, by exactitude in complying with the smaller observances, religious manifest their respect for the holy Founder of their Institute, who deemed it well to prescribe them, and who would not like to see them disregarded.

(*b*) In the second place, religious who mind small things give token of earnest devotedness. They recognize that every day is sanctified, not by the accomplishment of extraordinary works, but by the faithful religious performance of ordinary and even commonplace actions. Their assiduity, therefore, extends itself to these ordinary actions, even to the least of them. Their devotedness springs from their love of God and of duty. They deem nothing insignificant which God is pleased to demand of them, or

which is done to please Him. In all their actions devout religious seek to please Him, and they constantly tender proof of their love by the attention they give to all, even to the least, of the appointed religious observances, and by the care with which they comply with them.

Among friends, the rendering of small services affords a satisfaction which may even be out of keeping with the little that is done, and it tends to cement and preserve friendship. In God's service, compliance with the least of the prescribed observances demands a spirit of devotedness. It is this devotedness, rather than the act that is done, which is acceptable in God's eyes. If religious refuse Him this precious proof of love, may they be counted upon to fulfil faithfully the graver obligations? Their failure to comply with God's demands in one case, leaves room in our mind for misgiving as to their compliance with the demands of duty in the other case. Fervent religious carry their devotedness even to the extent of performing the least things prescribed, and they would not be satisfied with themselves if, without sufficient reason, they neglected them. Therefore may it be hoped that their works are full before God (Apoc. iii. 2).

(*c*) In the third place, religious who mind small things act with a wise forethought, because they are ever laying up treasure in Heaven.

Not the rarely occurring chances of doing something extraordinary, but the everyday occasions of doing little things, are the opportunities afforded religious of meriting in God's sight. It would be

wrong to suppose that God wishes us to merit Heaven only by extraordinary works performed on rare occasions, and that He does not wish us to merit abundantly every day, for we believe the contrary to be the case. Religious should act and form their conduct with the persuasion that, in His goodness and love, God wishes them to add immensely every day to their supernatural merit. They should therefore strive to turn to good account their daily and hourly opportunities of sanctifying their ordinary occupations, and to comply faithfully with all, even the least, enactments of their rule. How much wise forethought this effort would manifest! The heavenly reward of religious who mind small things will surpass that of others who do not scruple to disregard the smaller details of duty and observance.

(*d*) Finally, religious who mind small things give token thereby of fidelity in greater matters Harvesters who gather up the single heads of corn will assuredly gather in the sheaves. We recognize that, after all, in the religious life it is compliance with the graver obligations that really matters, for we shall be condemned if we commit grievous sins, or neglect serious duties. But who, we ask, may be counted upon to avoid serious faults? Is it not those who would not willingly offend even in small things? And who, we again ask, in the religious state may be relied upon to fulfil the graver obligations, if not religious who are faithful in regard even to the least? This is what our Lord has declared: 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also

in that which is greater.' When we see that religious would scruple to disregard the lesser details of observance, we may be sure that their conscience would certainly not permit them to neglect what is of moment.

At the same time, it should not be supposed that these observant religious are wanting in a due sense of proportion; that they do not understand the relative values of what is of much importance, and what is of lesser importance, and of what is of but little if any importance; or that they do not recognize that sometimes, on account of what is of greater moment, the lesser points of the rule may be disregarded. They do understand these things; but that does not in the least subtract from their love of all the prescriptions of the rule, even of the least; so that, when nothing of greater moment intervenes, they will be faithful even in the points of least importance. When less exact religious disregard these lesser points, it is not always because of more weighty demands. May it not often be accounted for by want of obedience, devotedness, or generosity? And do they not find that often their neglect of them opens the way to the neglect also of points of observance which are of greater importance? The demands of self-indulgence, leading religious to shirk duty, if not strenuously resisted, grow ever in number and force.

We see, then, reason why, through a sense of dutifulness, religious should mind small things, and why the conduct of such as do this should commend itself to our approval and imitation. Who are the

religious who condemn this exact conduct? Are they not religious who study too much their own convenience and pleasure, and who do not like what demands trouble, devotedness, or restraint? If only they were animated with a more perfect spirit of religious generosity and devotedness, they would be more perfect also in religious observance, with the happy result of greater spiritual gain and greater interior satisfaction.

32. Discretion.

In religious, thoughtlessness in conduct is faulty, and it may lead to unpleasant, and at times even to serious, consequences. A useful corrective of thoughtlessness is discretion. Religious need discretion as a counsellor. It will help them to do well what is right, and it will save them from doing much that might prove injurious to them. A wise man will be a discreet man. Religious would do well, as occasion arises, to put to themselves two questions—namely, 'Will it be discreet on my part to do this?' and 'How shall I act discreetly in this matter?' From how many false steps these questions will save them!

Let us consider how religious should regulate their interior faculties, as well as their exterior conduct, by the dictates of a wise discretion. They should therefore be discreet (*a*) in their thoughts, (*b*) in their designs, (*c*) in their conversations, (*d*) in their associations, and (*e*) in their general comportment.

(*a*) The mind is a very active faculty, and one that touches the spring of the whole system, to set it in motion. It is the seat and senate-house of our ideas, reasoning, and deliberations. From various sources it imbibes knowledge—which may prove to be profitable, misleading, or injurious—and it stores it up in the memory. Our will is guided and impelled in its appreciations and determinations by what we know and by our views, the fund of which is supplied by our mind. It matters, then, a great deal to us what thoughts occupy our mind. The mind should not be permitted to entertain thoughts that would disturb the right ordering of our conduct, or move us to what would be opposed to the perfect law of God's will. Nor should it be allowed to entertain thoughts that would depreciate our neighbour in our estimation, or bias us against him. The scribes did wrong to think evil of our Lord, and He said to them: 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?' (St. Matt. ix. 4). At another time He said, speaking of the things that defile a man: 'From the heart come forth evil thoughts' (St. Matt. xv. 19).

Religious should therefore use a wise discretion as to the thoughts which they permit to occupy their mind, and they should drive away any that might prove injurious or unprofitable. If at any time 'hurtful thoughts' (Jer. iv. 14) should have found place in their mind, and been at length banished, it would be very indiscreet on their part, by an act of reflection, to strive to recall them. Sometimes this is done, as though for purposes of self-examination; but, as a rule, and especially in the case of unchaste

thoughts, it should not be done, as it may give rise to temptation.

Evil thoughts have their relation to the various vices and to undutifulness and uncharitableness. If deliberately entertained, they affect the conduct, as they often lead to wrong-doing. To discretion in thought should be joined discretion in affection. Religious should prudently curb all affections that would take their heart from dutifulness to their vocation or which would be in any way injurious to religious becomingness. When conscience, as a watchful sentinel, gives warning of danger, they should say to themselves: 'Is it discreet to entertain these thoughts or these affections?'

(*b*) Religious should also regulate their designs by discretion. Thoughts suggest action, and then designs are formulated. These designs should be formulated according to the rules of rectitude and utility.

Discretion should lead religious to study the rectitude and utility of what is suggested and purposed, and they should be guided by the results of this examination. If they find that what they purpose doing would be morally wrong, being opposed to their duty to God, their neighbour, or themselves, or not in keeping with the duties of their state of life, then they should put the design away from them, and cease to entertain it. If they find that what they purpose doing would be unprofitable on some accounts, but useful on others, then discretion should lead them to weigh all the reasons in the balance, and to decide accordingly. But if they

find that what they purpose doing would be altogether useless, then discretion should direct them to leave it undone. The employment of discretion in this way would save religious from many unprofitable projects and from much disappointment and waste of time.

(*c*) Religious should be discreet in their conversations, both in the community and in their relations with seculars. If they always say the first thing that comes to their lips, they will often say the very thing they should not say. How much disedification is given by vain, uncharitable, and unwise conversations! The rectitude of our conversations should be discreetly weighed by what is required by humility, truthfulness, modesty, charity, meekness, respect for Superiors, and devotedness to the religious vocation. Discretion should regulate the tone and character of our remarks and the length of our conversations, and save us from exaggeration or excitement and from being tiresome or offensive to others. Religious should also be guided by discretion as regards the persons with whom they should converse and the time and place of their conversations. If in all these ways discreetly regulated, their conversations will not cause disedification or uneasiness of conscience to themselves or others, nor will they give rise to disturbance, animosity, injury to the neighbour's character, breach of rule, or other undutifulness. It is chiefly by indiscreet conversations that mischief and disorder are created in a community, and that bad feeling is engendered between individual members.

(*d*) Religious are bound by the holy character of their vocation and their consecration to God to be careful according to the wise directions of their rule in their associations, and this is a matter of very great importance. If the rules of a wise discretion be not followed, how much faultiness and disedification may result!

Religious should not associate with persons with whom their Superiors do not wish them to associate, and with such persons they should not carry on either public or private correspondence. They should not associate with those whose company, conversations, influence, or attachment would be in any way prejudicial to their religious character, virtue, observance, or vocation. Especially should they observe the laws of a strict discretion in their relations with persons of the other sex; and in the case of such persons, if any undue attachment should be perceived, they should be careful not to lend it any encouragement by unnecessary visits or correspondence, or by look, smile, or word.

A wise discretion will lead religious to distinguish between human fondness, dutiful affection, and Christian charity, all which spring from different sources. Fondness which springs from nature presents to the religious mind various dangers. Such, indeed, is human frailty that danger may arise, not only from flattery and admiration, but even from sympathy also. Religious should be on their guard when such dangers arise.

The receiving of presents, as well as the giving of them, is regulated by the vow of poverty and by the

arrangements of Superiors. What religious obligations in these respects demand should be discreetly and conscientiously complied with, without concealment, ruse, or other unfaithfulness. Discretion in all these matters that deal with associations will save religious from qualms of conscience, from causing disedification, and from various dangers.

(*e*) There is, finally, the matter of religious behaviour generally. Religious have a character to maintain which is unworldly and different in various ways from that of persons in other paths of life. In the community and out of it there should be a gentleness, a kindness of manner and of speech, and a reserve, which should edify and win respect.

Discretion should therefore regulate the exterior comportment of religious, so as to preserve them from noisiness, abruptness, impoliteness, untidiness, impatience, and indecorum in gait or posture. Discretion will suggest a guardedness of the senses, especially out of doors. Such discretion will tend to edification, and it will prove a help to interior recollection and religiousness. In the case of religious who have to deal with children, their discreet example will be especially profitable, showing the children how they should behave. Indiscreet behaviour would have a very undesirable effect.

Discretion should become as a habit, and then its influence on character and conduct will be constant, and without undue constraint, and it will save religious from many faults. If they look up to our Lady, to St. Joseph, and to other saints, as models, and if they study the advice and prescriptions of

their holy rules, they will learn many useful lessons in discretion, and they will become more conformable with what our Divine Lord demands of them in their privileged vocation.

33. Labour for our Sanctification.

While many men in the world put before themselves as the goal of their efforts some worldly gain or distinction, religious consecrated to God make it their chief end to labour for their sanctification. If they were to neglect this end, and if, in consequence, they were to fall into a condition of spiritual indifference and imperfection, resembling that of many persons in the world, their fault would be serious, because of their falling so far short of what God expects of them and of what their holy calling demands. Religious have therefore to guard themselves against neglect in labouring for their sanctification.

Religious should labour for their sanctification, especially in five ways—namely, (*a*) by avoiding the ways of evil and of neglect; (*b*) by assiduity in prayer; (*c*) by devotedness to their vows; (*d*) by fervour in receiving the holy sacraments; and (*e*) by cultivating the true religious spirit and observance.

(*a*) Sometimes, after the term of the novitiate, the first fervour dies away, and religious become remiss. The great work of their sanctification no longer holds its honoured position in their endeavours. Nature's disinclination for spirituality and discipline begins again to obtain its place among the control-

ling forces of their life and character, and, unhappily, its clamours for relaxation are listened to.

When religious perceive in themselves this falling away, they should at once strive to check and correct it; for if they permit the relaxed spirit to gain ground in them and to hold sway over them, they will soon become less guarded against danger, less eager for good, less resolute under temptation, and less diligent in fulfilling the obligations of their state. All this will militate against advancing the work of their sanctification. They must, therefore, resolutely avoid the ways of evil and of neglect, and if they see themselves falling into them, they must rein themselves up, and seek once more the path of their first fervour.

The longer they are in religion, the more fervent, pious, prudent, and observant should religious be; but, alas! how often it is the very contrary! How lamentable is the case of religious who knowingly expose themselves to the danger of sin, and who relapse again and again into the same sins without any serious effort to correct themselves! How sad, too, is the case of others, whose whole life is one of spiritual apathy and of undutifulness in fulfilling the obligations of the religious life! Such as these, having their heart fixed on other things, many of which are vain and unprofitable, do not labour as they ought for their sanctification. Such persistent faultiness should be checked and corrected.

(*b*) Religious cannot be said to labour earnestly for their sanctification if they are not assiduous in

prayer. How shall they 'advance in grace' (St. Luke ii. 52) if they neglect this ordinary means of obtaining it?

How edifying is the conduct of religious who have acquired a habit of prayer! They recommend to God themselves and all they do, not only at the times prescribed for prayer, but also at other times. They readily turn to Him in their labours and difficulties. This is the most practical manifestation of their faith, of their confidence in God, and of their religious spirit. Their piety is not in vain. God does not disappoint their expectations. He protects them and blesses their works. The measure of their assiduity in prayer is also that of their spiritual advancement. They are ever labouring for their sanctification.

(*c*) Religious should also prosecute this profitable labour by devotedness to their vows. Seeing that the observance of the vows is the special work of the religious life, it is evident that it must have a special bearing on their spiritual advancement. The more truly and completely religious are poor, chaste, and obedient, the farther will they advance their sanctification.

How much faultiness and how many spiritual evils will be avoided, and how much spiritual gain will be acquired, when religious study earnestly to practise poverty, carefully to safeguard chastity, and to love and practise obedience! Alas! there are, unhappily, religious who are remiss in doing these things. They find the strict observance of religious poverty irksome; they are not sufficiently discreet and un-

compromising in what regards chastity, and in various ways they strive to shirk compliance with what is enjoined by obedience. Perhaps, being self-willed, they do not love submission. This unfaithfulness in spirit and in practice causes these faulty religious to lose much of the spiritual gain which their state of life should yield, and they fall from one imperfection into another. How different is happily the condition of religious who are loyal and devoted in observing their vows! These devout religious advance from virtue to virtue, and they are truly labouring for their sanctification.

(*d*) Another sure way for religious to labour profitably for their sanctification, is that of fervour in receiving the holy sacraments, for the sacraments are the especially appointed channels of heavenly grace. In receiving them there is sometimes a careless routine, which prevents the soul from reaping all the rich fruits which they should yield. The means of grace should be used reverently, assiduously, and lovingly. The frequent approaching to the sacrament of Penance, should be an event comprising reconciliation and renewal; that is to say, reconciliation with the Sacred Heart after falls and infidelities sincerely repented of; and renewal in fervour, in resolute determination to be more faithful and more guarded, and in confidence in God's unfailing assistance. Every confession made thus devoutly, will bring fresh impetus to religious in labouring for their sanctification.

The daily reception of the Holy Eucharist will be the soul's greatest joy, if only accompanied by

fervent dispositions, and a true relish of our Lord's presence. It is the daily visit to religious of their Lord and Master—'The Master is come' (St. John xi. 28). He should receive a loving welcome. He rests silently in their heart as in His tabernacle, and there He opens His treasures to enrich them with the graces they most need. He is busy there with the work of their sanctification. What enlightenment, strength, courage, patience, and consolation, devout religious in every age have experienced from the fervent reception of Holy Communion! How many became great Saints through the graces therein received!

(*e*) Finally, to advance the work of their sanctification, religious should ever strive to cultivate the true religious spirit, and to be faithful in religious observance. They should ever remember the holy character of their calling, and what it demands of them. Their habit, abode, and surroundings ever remind them that theirs is a special and privileged calling. Their spirit, and their manner of life, should be in keeping with these things, which are yet only the external marks of their special vocation. What a help to fervour and spiritual effort it should be to religious to keep ever in their remembrance that they are consecrated to God! How unworldly and unselfish, therefore, should be their thoughts, aims, and aspirations! With these interior accompaniments of true religiousness should correspond also their exterior life—that is, their conversation, manners, religious observance, and actions. In religious, all this is not a mere matter of choice or

of indifference, but one of becomingness, and of duty. This dutiful attention to interior and exterior religiousness will necessitate a series of religious acts, and a system and order of conduct, which will be productive of great spiritual merit, and will be attended with practical and effectual advancement of the work of their sanctification.

Happy will religious be who, while attentive to the various duties of their calling, fail not in using these means of labouring for their sanctification. They will be as fruitful trees, planted near the running waters (Ps. i. 3). They will be the religious who manifest a pious, constant zeal in carrying out the works to which they are appointed. They will advance the cause of God and of religion, and their edifying life will bring rich blessings upon themselves and upon their Institute.

34. Devotedness to God's Will.

The truest test of religiousness is devotedness to God's Will in every circumstance of life. Religious in whom this devotedness exists will never go astray, nor will they ever be wanting in grace to make them faithful to their vocation. This sanctifying devotedness will stamp their soul with greatness, for through it their will will be united with the Divine will, and this union is the very foundation of sanctity and of supernatural merit.

Let us consider three effects of this union in the daily life of religious. (*a*) It will give them a zest in observing their rule, and in fulfilling their duties;

(*b*) it will support them in their undertakings; and (*c*) it will inspire them with patience and submission in time of trial and suffering.

(*a*) Religious, consecrated to God, have not to ask themselves what master they are serving. They know by their religious profession and calling they have only one Master—God. Their habit, the daily routine of duty, their spiritual exercises, and their relations with their Superiors, in whose authority they recognize the authority of our Lord—all these things remind them that God is their Master, and that they are serving Him. With what devotedness He merits to be served! Josue said to the Israelites: 'Serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart' (Jos. xxiv. 14); and David said: 'Serve ye the Lord with gladness' (Ps. xcix. 2). God, being infinite in all perfections, is most perfect in all His wills (Ps. cx. 2, 3), and all who obey His wills become perfect according to the measure of their compliance.

Religious are taught to see in the requirements emanating from the authority of their Superiors, and from the holy discipline of the rule of their Institute, ordainments emanating from God Himself. They fulfil these requirements, and all the claims of religious observance, as thereby doing God's will. They are therefore always in spirit obeying God and not man. Thus is their submission raised in character and rendered highly meritorious. Thus is their will brought into conformity with God's will, not only in a general way, but even in a most particular and detailed manner.

Religious wish only to know what is God's will in their regard that they may do it. How promptly, then, and gladly, they obey the voice of the Superior or the sound of the bell! These indicate what God requires of them, and the time when His requirements have to be complied with. Devout religious are ever waiting for the word of command, and when they hear it they are ready, and they obey; they do not demur or complain, for it is a pleasure to them to obey.

Religious are appointed to certain duties or offices. They accept them, not because the duties or offices are to their liking, but because they believe it to be God's will that they should do so. Having accepted them in this becoming spirit, good religious continue with zest in the performance of their duties, because such is God's will, and they are prepared to retire promptly and readily from their office when their Superiors intimate their will in the matter. Religious should strive for this devotedness, which leads to such happy results.

(*b*) In the second place, devotedness to God's will will support religious in their undertakings. Good works are inspired by grace, and all who, after prudent examination as to the inspiration, undertake them, should do so valiantly and generously. They are encouraged to do this by the thought that, since it is God's will that they should do the good works, God will therefore support them in their performance of them.

How admirable was the courageous spirit in which holy founders began the work of founding their

Institutes! And when they experienced trouble, disappointment, and opposition, how patiently they bore these trials and annoyances, never desisting from their undertaking! How are we to account for this courage, patience, and constancy? The holy founders said to themselves: 'These trials come by God's permission for some wise purpose. God will support us, and bring everything to a successful issue if only we seek to do His will.' The issue always proved how well-founded was their trust.

This is the conduct of all true religious in their undertakings. They begin them, having only in view, not any selfish aim, but to do God's will; and they feel strong and confident in accomplishing them, because in their undertakings they are labouring not for their own ends, but to please God, and to do His will. They are animated by these intentions and sentiments in pursuing their vocation. They know that it is God's will that they should be good religious—that they should therefore be faithful to their Institute, to their vows, to their rule, to their community, and to duty. They are encouraged to trust in God for grace to be, and to do, all He demands of them.

How generous, then, they are seen to be in practising religious observance, in fulfilling the duties of their charge, and in resisting worldly influences! Their Superiors understand the motives by which such religious are actuated, and they know that they may count upon them. In the midst of their labours and in the hour of sacrifice these devout religious seem to say: 'If only I do God's will I am satisfied,

for God will be with me.' What a corrective, then, of self-seeking is this devotedness to God's will!

Religious actuated by it, when they contemplate seeking any change in their employment or place of abode, are careful first of all to pray for light and grace to know what is God's will in the matter. They propose to themselves, not their own convenience or pleasure, or escape from labour or difficulty, but only what will be most for God's glory. A true sense of religion convinces them that their ways and their works will be unprofitable if the blessing of God be not on them.

(*c*) Lastly, union with God's will should inspire religious with patience and submission in time of trial and suffering. Especially when nature is contradicted, and when it therefore affords us no support, as in suffering, do we need to seek comfort and support from what is supernatural. When we are able to say, in our trials and sufferings, that God has ordained them, we have laid the foundation for comfort and resignation. It remains only to add, 'God's holy will be done.'

Religious regard from a religious point of view all that happens, and therefore they display more practical wisdom than do men who judge only according to the lights and dictates of nature. Religious know that they should ever kiss the hand of their Divine Benefactor and Heavenly Physician. It may be a hand of correction and of healing as well as one of bountifulness, but it is always the hand of a loving Father Who ordains everything for the best.

Religious see, too, how the decree of suffering

included within its scope the Divine Jesus and the sinless Mary; they remember the cruel sufferings and death of the one and the seven bitter dolours of the other; and they say that, if there be any fitness and proportion in things, they themselves should also fall under the decree of suffering, and that, on account of their many sins, the measure of their sufferings should be exceedingly great. Devout religious, therefore, recognize that it is by God's will that their labours, disappointments, anxieties, pains and sicknesses, come upon them, and religion teaches them that all God's dispensations are wise and beneficent. They remember, too, how the Saints had their share of sorrows, and how this was a token of God's love, and of predestination, and they take comfort from the thought. Although, indeed, nature may groan under the trials, yet the spirit embraces them dutifully; and conformity with God's will sanctifies them, and renders them meritorious.

Let it be held, then, that devotedness to God's will is the key of sanctity, of religious constancy, of peace of heart, and of supernatural merit. Happy are religious who seek only to do God's will! Nothing will befall them contrary to their desires. God will find in them servants faithful and exact in His service; and no murmur against the Divine dispensations will pass their lips. Although their lives may not be remarkable for any apparently magnificent achievements, they will yet bear the stamp of true religiousness, and these devout religious will merit the reward promised by our Lord, when He said: 'He that doeth the will of My Father, Who is in

heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven' (St. Matt. vii. 21).

35. Contradictions.

Some persons are so unreasonable as to expect never to be opposed or contradicted. Do they forget that we all have different temperaments and often have different ideas and aims? It is impossible under the present conditions of existence that there should not be contradictions and opposition. In religion, besides these ordinary conditions arising from varieties of temperament and other causes, there is also the condition of being under submission and constraint. Religious may not have their own way in all things; nor will all things be regulated to meet their ideas, or to satisfy their wishes. It must therefore necessarily follow that they will meet with various contradictions. It is important that religious should admit that this must be so; and they should therefore prepare themselves to encounter a certain amount of faultiness in others, and they should even admit that there may be some in themselves.

Let us consider (1) how these contradictions may arise, and (2) in what spirit they should be borne.

1. We have to examine how contradictions may arise. We will consider three quarters from which they may come. (*a*) Religious may themselves be the cause of contradiction, because of their own unreasonableness or inconsiderateness. (*b*) At other times, contradictions come from other members of the community. (*c*) And at other times, again, they come from the Superiors.

(*a*) What are the occasions upon which religious may be said to invite contradiction? They are themselves to blame for the contradictions of which they complain, when they expect to have certain things which are not in keeping with the spirit or letter of the Constitutions, and do not therefore receive them; or when they wish to carry out certain plans of their own, which cannot be sanctioned, and they are therefore prevented from doing so. It happens, too, that religious wish to spend their time in a certain manner, and it is not allowed, because duty marks out other things that have to be done. At other times, religious who expect every consideration in their own case, but who fail to extend due consideration to others, act in a manner to cause inconvenience to other members of the community, and they are therefore prevented or corrected. In these, and in all such cases, some contradiction is experienced; but it arises from the unreasonableness or inconsiderateness of the religious themselves, and they have no just grounds of complaint against others.

(*b*) Contradictions sometimes come from the members of the community. It is almost impossible that all the members of a community should be of the same even temperament, or should be equally amiable in character. There may not always be a fault, when one religious crosses another, for both may be acting with a right intention, but they may view the matter in different lights. Even after the trouble is over, different views of the matter may still prevail; and one of the parties, or both, may even see that it would

have been better to have acted differently; but yet before the trouble arose, both meant well.

Contradictions sometimes arise from difference of temperament, or faultiness of character. It may be well to make a practical study of these causes, and therefore to picture to ourselves cases that may be met with, so that we may be prepared to deal with them and to bear with them.

Amongst religious of every temperament, some may be very persistent, others may be easily annoyed; some may be inclined to take offence, even when none is intended, others may be too forward and officious; some may be impatient and short-tempered, and others dull and trying. It can, therefore, be easily understood, where temperaments are so various, that contradictions and opposition may from time to time be met with. Thus, when some religious are buoyant and eager in any matter, others may offer discouragement and refuse to help, or they may raise obstacles. When some religious eagerly suggest one plan, others may just as eagerly suggest something quite contrary. When some are doing their best for some laudable purpose, others, moved by different ideas, may act in a way to upset everything that is being done. Sometimes, owing to a misunderstanding, complaints will be carried to the Superior, and trouble may be caused, even when there is no real fault.

So far, I am supposing that religious from whom contradictions come are only misguided, or that, while meaning well, they think and act in opposition to others. But, alas! in religion, there may be wilful-

ness and intentional nastiness, jealousy, dislike, and vindictiveness. These faults, indeed, should have no place where charity and peace should reign. Moved by some kind of bad spirit, faulty religious may give annoyance to others in various ways. Let us suppose cases of this kind. These faulty religious may create a bad feeling against others, and cause them to be changed in their employment or office. They may be the means of having others looked upon with mistrust, and they may even address others in a surly or provoking manner. In all these and such-like cases, contradictions and opposition are painful, because there is a distinct faultiness on the part of those who cause them.

(*c*) We come now to contradictions that come from Superiors. They arise sometimes from refusal on the part of Superiors to grant even lawful requests, or from their appointing subjects to employment for which they have no liking, or from corrections deserved or not deserved, or, lastly, from interference by Superiors with pet plans, or with work that is found pleasurable. These are only some of the cases in which religious may meet with contradictions coming from their Superiors. No fault is hereby attributed to Superiors in these cases —they may have their own good reasons for what they do—but what is done is sometimes felt keenly by the subjects, particularly if they are of a sensitive nature.

2. Having drawn these various pictures of contradictions that may be met with in religion, we have to consider how they should be borne.

Severe trials or severe penances are quite exceptional in religious communities; for, as a rule, the comforts as well as the necessities of the members are sufficiently provided for, and life runs on smoothly. If, then, as has been suggested, various contradictions are met with, they should be regarded by religious as permitted by God for wise purposes. Such purposes may be that religious may be tried, or may have something to bear, so that their spirit may be chastened; or, again, that they may find in these contradictions an opportunity of practising virtue, of doing penance, of drawing down grace now, and of meriting heavenly rewards hereafter. Religious should therefore prize them, and strive to turn them to good account.

Contradictions will come: how should they be borne? There may sometimes be cases in which, with a view to needed and desirable correction of others, religious should mention their troubles of this kind to the Superior. They should, however, do this in a prudent and kindly way, without ill-feeling.

Apart from such cases, religious should, in most other cases, bear their contradictions meekly, patiently, and even silently. They should take care not to manifest resentment, not to render evil for evil (1 St. Pet. iii. 9), not to inflame another's anger, not to create uncharitableness, and not to increase dislike or ill-feeling.

In tribulation should religiousness, if real, come forth in its beauty and strength. Thus should it be when religious experience contradiction. Instead

of showing weakness, petulance, and resentment, they should keep their soul in patience, and offer the contradiction with a humble mind to God; for religiousness should make them 'rich in virtue, studying beautifulness, living at peace' (Ecclus. xliv. 6). If religious must expose the sorrow and pain they feel, let it be to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—to Jesus, 'Who, when He was reviled, did not revile' (1 St. Pet. ii. 23), and Who without murmuring bore contradictions, opposition, hardships, and cruelty for our sake. Precious will then be their offering; and they will experience more comfort and satisfaction, than if they carried their complaints and grievances to men.

36. The Spirit of Sacrifice.

Religious have not embraced their special calling simply that they may therein lead a quiet and easy life, relieved of the worries which harass and distract most persons in the world. If, then, persons in religion were to murmur and complain, because they have to suffer some inconvenience or want, because their duties deprive them of leisure and cause them fatigue, because they may not follow their own whims, or because everything is not arranged according to their own liking, what, we would ask, should be said of their religious spirit? In such case, could they be said to have the spirit of self-denial, submission, devotedness, and patience, which their calling demands? Would it not, in fact, appear that they are disturbed in mind, because they find that in religion they are not permitted to

enjoy an easy life, and to consult their own wishes and convenience?

Being called to tend to perfection by the observance of their vows and rules, religious should be prepared even for what is arduous in practising virtue, and in submitting to the requirements of a holy discipline. And persons seeking to enter into religion, should before entering reckon what amount of self-sacrifice will be demanded in the kind of life which they desire to embrace. Our Lord said: 'Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?' (St. Luke xiv. 27, 28). Our Lord's followers must be prepared to take up the cross, and this necessarily demands a spirit of sacrifice.

Religious who wish to sanctify themselves by the many means which the religious state affords of doing so have need of a true spirit of sacrifice. When this spirit exists in an eminent degree, no labour would appear to be considered too arduous, no humiliation too trying, no observance too severe, and no poverty excessive. All religious do not, however, possess this spirit in so exalted a degree; but all should at least recognize (1) the value and necessity of self-sacrifice, and all should know (2) from what source they should seek inspiration and leading, that they may strive to acquire the spirit of sacrifice.

1. We see the value and necessity of the spirit of

self-sacrifice in religious, when we examine the various requirements of their calling.

(*a*) In the first place, we find that the religious state demands a constant submission. If they would meet this demand generously, religious must sacrifice their own will and their leisure, and they must place at the disposal of their Superiors themselves, their abilities, and their time. In doing these things, and in following the regulations of the community, there is no room for self-love, self-will, and self-indulgence. Yet is there anything that costs men more than to restrain, correct, and renounce these things? For are they not the tyrants that exercise dominion over the lives of many men? They are, however, incompatible with a faithful observance of religious poverty, chastity, obedience, and discipline. Religious, therefore, to be true to their obligations, must correct their self-love, self-will, and self-indulgence, so far as these clash with the duties of their calling; and this cannot be done without a true spirit of sacrifice.

(*b*) Consider, in the second place, the need of the spirit of self-sacrifice in other requirements of the religious life. See it in the practice of humility, meekness, charity, mortification, and patience. Religious, moreover, have to labour for God's glory and for the benefit of souls committed to their charge, and they are employed in works of beneficence. In pursuing their holy vocation, they have to lead an unworldly life, and by their very profession they are placed before others for edification. They should, therefore, abstain from whatever might

disedify. They should avoid all conceit and self-glorification, all sloth and self-seeking, all anger and uncharitableness, and all immoderation in the use of the ordinary goods of life. All this demands that self should be subdued, and that a disinterested zeal, together with piety, should be displayed. To all this virtue and disinterestedness how necessary is the spirit of sacrifice!

(*c*) In the third place, the value of this spirit of sacrifice is seen in its power of enhancing the merit of what religious do for God. When they do what is easy in itself, and do it without any particular devotedness, if it be done from a good supernatural motive, it will yet be pleasing to God. When, however, being imbued with a spirit of sacrifice, they do what is difficult, painful, or laborious, and, notwithstanding what it may cost them, do it with real devotedness, then will their work be specially pleasing to God, and highly meritorious in His eyes. How pleasing to Him are those religious who, without any thought for themselves, and without reckoning the labour or fatigue, pursue their vocation with zeal and are always found ready for any duty, however arduous it may be! What, we may ask, would become of religious Institutes, if they had not among their members subjects imbued with this spirit of self-sacrifice?

2. Let us now consider at what source religious should seek to imbibe this spirit. They should ever have before them, as their brightest model, their Divine Lord and Master. He came into the world to sacrifice Himself for our salvation, and His whole

life was in keeping with this noble end. Although He was God, yet He did not deem it too much tc empty Himself, and to humble Himself (Phil. ii. 7, 8), to labour, to suffer, to bear with ignominy and contempt, and even to give His life for our sake. He gave up His will entirely to His Heavenly Father. Sacrifice was stamped upon His whole life from the stable at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary. See Him in the Garden of Olives. There He embraced beforehand all the torments of His sacred Passion; He was ready to drink to the very dregs the chalice of His excruciating sufferings. What was His prayer? 'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt' (St. Matt. xxvi. 39). He deemed no sacrifice too great or too painful to make for us. This is the Divine model from which religious should draw inspiration.

While we are on earth, we are not in a state of complete happiness, but in one of many trials. We may say with St. Paul: 'While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, and not by sight' (2 Cor. v. 6, 7). We should strive to live united to Christ as He was when on earth, that we may finally be united to Him in His heavenly glory. Until we attain to the realization of this happiness, we must be content to bear the cross; for it is written: 'Yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him' (Rom. viii. 17).

Religious should therefore see more reason for misgiving when they are free from trial, than when many trials harass them. And in their troubles

they should deem themselves privileged to suffer with Christ and for His sake. They should study to bear their trials without petulance, with an even temper, and with patience and resignation. Blessed will they be if, imbued with a perfect spirit of self-sacrifice, they count themselves happy to suffer something for God's sake, and for their soul's chastening. Self-indulgent religious have much to correct before they attain to the wisdom which teaches them to value suffering as a blessing, and as a spiritual gain.

Religious should, then, seek to acquire a true spirit of sacrifice. The more completely they are imbued with it, the more fully will they relish spiritual things, and shake off the slothful carnal spirit which is an obstacle to correspondence with grace. There would never have been a St. Francis, or a St. Teresa, without this spirit, which is the lever by which the natural man is lifted up to be spiritual, and by which religious are lifted up to attain to the perfection of their holy calling.

37. Character of the Sacrifice Demanded.

The sacrifice of themselves, and of their will, which religious make, should have the character of being (*a*) entire and (*b*) constant.

(*a*) Unhappily, all religious do not aim at rendering their consecration to God sacred by its entirety. If persons were to leave the world, and enter into religion, chiefly with the object of escaping from the worries of life in the world, there would be a want of entirety in the sacrifice of themselves to God in a

vocation which demands self-denial. They should embrace such a vocation with sentiments, dispositions, and aspirations more in keeping with it. What, then, should be said of professed religious, if they sought only their own ease and convenience, and if they were to strive to shirk laborious duties, or if they were not amenable to the holy discipline of their state? Their conduct would manifest a want of the spirit of self-sacrifice. It might be said of some religious that they are willing to be followers of our Lord on Mount Thabor, but not on Mount Calvary.

The want of entirety in the spirit of sacrifice and devotedness shows a faultiness of disposition, and it will be accompanied by faultiness in conduct. Especially will there be a want of generosity and of exactitude in religious observance and in the fulfilment of duty. Undutiful religious might draw some lesson in self-sacrifice by studying St. Paul's words: 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His' (Rom. viii. 9). The Apostle himself was imbued with an ardent desire of imitating our Lord, and he was able to say: 'With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 19, 20).

We have not the true spirit of Christ if we are not prepared to take up our cross and follow Him. Religious should surpass ordinary Christians in the spirit of self-denial, and in that of union with Christ. They should desire to live ever united in spirit with Christ, Who is their Divine Model and their only Good. So to live, demands the twofold spirit of piety and sacrifice. They should desire to imitate

Him in His entire and constant devotedness to the will of His heavenly Father. When He came into the world, He was ever moved by that devotedness which led Him to embrace the glorious mission for which He came, with all its labours, contradictions, humiliations, and sufferings, and the ignominious death by which He was to redeem the world.

Moved by a spirit of self-sacrifice, religious should be prepared to embrace all the labours, trials, and inconvenience which may fall to them in pursuing their holy vocation. They, too, like St. Paul, should be able to say: 'With Christ I am nailed to the cross.' Theirs, however, will not be a crucifixion of the body, but one of the heart and will. They have not to face the scourging, and the crowning with thorns; they will not be buffeted or spit upon; nor will cruel nails be driven through their hands and feet. But they must be prepared for that sacrifice of themselves and of their leisure and convenience, which a faithful observance of the duties of their state demands. Their observance should not be confined to only some points of the rule, it should be extended to all. This will be a token of the entirety of their sacrifice.

(*b*) The sacrifice which the religious state demands should have also the character of constancy. One of the first duties impressed upon religious is that of giving up their own will. This self-renunciation must go on even to the end. Without it, there will be a service that will not be fully acceptable, and that will be marked with a continuous faultiness. When religious consecrate their life to God, their

constancy in fulfilling the duties of their calling, and in bearing patiently its trials, must give proof of the reality of this consecration. Where would be its reality, if they were to be dutiful only for a few years, and were then to fall away, and become remiss?

Their Divine Model teaches them constancy. Our Lord did not seek to escape from the ignominy of His sufferings. He bore up under all the pains and outrages of His sacred Passion, and was faithful to the end. Then was He able to say: 'It is consummated.' While admiring this devotedness, and while satisfying their devotion in commemorating the mysteries of the Passion, and thanking our Lord for all the blessings they have brought to mankind, religious should also study the lesson of constancy which He has given. Their sacrifice in pursuing their vocation should be not only entire in what it embraces, but also constant in its duration, so that their motto should be 'All, and always.'

The picture of religious who have lost the spirit of their vocation, and who cease to be observant, is a painful one. While causing pain and uneasiness to their Superiors, and disedification to others, these religious derive little, if any, satisfaction to themselves from their conduct. They draw back from being nailed to Christ's cross, and they fasten themselves to a harder one of misgiving and many miseries. How different would their case be, if only they listened to the inspirations of grace, and responded generously to its calls! While they listen to the voice of a slothful and perverse nature, many will be their faults and follies.

Religious should wisely seek to follow their vocation with generosity and devotedness. This they will do, if their sacrifice of themselves has the character of being entire and constant. They should mistrust their own waywardness. They did not enter into religion to do their own will. The more they seek to gratify it, the further will they depart from the way of perfection to which God calls them. But if they have the true spirit of self-sacrifice, then will they curb and correct what is wayward in themselves, and make it their joy to meet God's demands on them, for the glory of His Name, in a faithful, constant pursuit of their holy vocation.

38. Purity of Conscience.

Everything in their state of life should lead religious onward in the path of perfection. This will be readily admitted when account is taken of the helps found in their holy calling; such as the very discipline of religion, the virtues inculcated and demanded, the frequent reception of the sacraments, the daily religious exercises, the character of the works enjoined, and the wise direction of the rule. The edifying lives of so many religious prove that all these helps to sanctity are not without their efficacy. Yet faultiness creeps in. We may say that this should not be, but the fact remains that it is so. All religious should set their face earnestly against faultiness. What directions should their efforts take in order to avoid it themselves? They should ever strive to maintain purity of conscience.

David asked: 'Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill?' And he answered his own question, saying: 'He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice' (Ps. xiv. 1, 2). He who does these things maintains purity of conscience.

If religious would preserve their conscience pure, they should often reflect on subjects suitable to urge them to do so, and they should endeavour to avoid every kind of sin, even the least wilful fault.

The subjects likely to produce this desired effect are such as the following: (*a*) The sanctity of God, (*b*) the fruits which grace should produce in the soul, (*c*) the evil of sin, (*d*) the end proposed in the religious state, and (*e*) the charm of innocence of life. Let us consider what thoughts these subjects suggest.

(*a*) God, Whose holy law should ever be the rule of our life, and the guide of our whole conduct, is Sanctity itself. He is infinite in sanctity. While the blessed in heaven joyfully and reverently render homage to God's sanctity by their continual chant of praise, saying: 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' they are joined by us on earth ever praying: 'Hallowed be Thy Name.' But to this homage of our lips must be added the true homage emanating from the holy character of our life.

God cannot endure sin, for it is opposed to His infinite sanctity. Sin is so far opposed to it, that it may be described as a monster that would rise up, if possible, to destroy God. God's abhorrence of sin extends even to the least wilful fault. With what

countenance, then, can religious pretend to be God's most faithful servants, if they are indifferent about committing sin? particularly, if they do so without remorse, and without any serious effort to correct themselves? Their dutiful respect for God's sanctity should lead them to strive to avoid with assiduous care every kind of sin, and even the least deliberate fault. This respect must be manifested not only by their praise and exterior religious conduct, but also by the holy character of their thoughts and affections. It is written: 'Inquisition shall be made into the thoughts of the ungodly' (Wisd. i. 9). Religious should ever bear in mind that wherever they may be, or whatever their occupations may be, the God of all holiness is ever present; and they should therefore respect His presence by refraining from all evil. And they should, moreover, strive to please Him by their good motives and conduct.

(*b*) In the second place, religious should aim at purity of conscience, because of the fruits which grace produces in the soul. Purity of conscience supposes an exact observance of God's law, the faithful practice of prayer, and a careful avoidance of evil. All this demands effort, effort supported by grace. This effort will undoubtedly be rewarded with spiritual gifts and gains. Our desires in this matter, and the efforts they give rise to, make the soul as the good ground, fit for the operations of grace. As a consequence, grace comes. By a bestowal of many actual graces, God draws the soul, leading and sustaining it in the path of perfection.

This bountiful providence on God's part is to us

a more fruitful and comforting blessing than any temporal blessing however great; and this blessing is the happy portion of religious who aim at purity of conscience.

Therefore do these religious succeed where others fail, and feel peaceful and contented, while others, less assiduous in pleasing God, are in unrest and trouble of mind. How admirable, in the midst of opposition, anxieties, and temptations, is the tranquillity of soul of religious who live in union with God, faithful to grace and duty!

(*c*) Another thought which should move religious to strive to maintain purity of conscience is that of the evil of sin. As adopted children of God, as the redeemed of Christ our Saviour, as heirs of the heavenly kingdom, they should ever detest sin as the greatest of evils. It is an outrage on God, the best of fathers, Whose claims upon their love are numberless and incontestable. Should not religious be so minded as even to prefer to die than to offend Him? Mortal sin cuts off men from God's friendship, and, while it remains on the soul, separates them from Him—the separation may become everlasting. Venial sin is an obstacle to the flow of His graces, and it brings the soul into the punishment of Purgatory, and also in this life does injury to it in many ways. When religious reflect often on the evil of sin, they are moved to use all diligence to correct their faults and to avoid sin.

In their reflections they will see how by sin they prove ungrateful to our Lord, Who became man to save them from sin. They will see how He has

opened to men the fountains of many spiritual blessings, and how sin draws away their heart from Him, causing them to prefer passing satisfactions and empty gains. They will see how mortal sin deprives men of the heavenly inheritance, and how venial sin delays their entrance into heaven, and lessens their degree of glory. Finally, they will recognize how it is both unworthy and unwise on their part wilfully to offend God, even by lesser sins; and they will acknowledge how many reasons there are for looking upon sin as the greatest of evils.

Religious who make such reflections as these lament with sincere sorrow their many faults, and they strive to avoid every kind of sin. Of other religious, who seem to make little of venial sins, should it not be said that they are wanting in an enlightened faith, in reverence and love for God, and in a true sense of their obligations? They are seen to continue in a careless, faulty manner of life, and consequently, they cannot but suffer many spiritual losses, and bring many stains on their conscience.

(*d*) The thought of the end proposed in the religious life should also move religious to a careful manner of living, so as to preserve purity of conscience. Is not this end to attain to the perfection of charity, and therefore to seek to offer God at all times a service pleasing to Him, removing and avoiding what is contrary to so holy a service, and using the means necessary to attain the perfection which is proposed?

Religious are established in a state of life, demanding that by a faithful observance of their vows and

rules they shall tend to this perfection. Since they have undertaken as an obligation what was only of counsel, should they not feel themselves bound to keep their conscience free from all sin? since, for all men, to do this is more than of counsel—it is of precept. Certainly, if they resolutely and constantly labour to attain the end of the religious life, they will recognize the duty of striving to avoid everything that might sully their conscience.

(*e*) Lastly, the thought of the charm of innocence of life ought to win religious to use effort to maintain purity of conscience. How edifying it is to meet with religious who are devout and regular in their way of life, who are affable, humble, and modest in their demeanour, kind and charitable in their conversation, and evidently recollected and holy in mind! What does all this betoken if not innocence of mind, heart, and life? God sees also in them what is hidden from mortal eye—namely, a ready correspondence with His inspirations, many holy desires, and a sustained effort to please Him in all things. Their fidelity is rewarded with special lights and holy impulses, and they are among the happy friends of God to whom the yoke of religion is sweet, and the burden light.

Such reflections as these should move religious to aim at preserving purity of conscience. The desire should not be ineffective. What, then, should their conduct be? They should watch over their mind, so as to be prompt in rejecting all dangerous or unworthy thoughts. They should restrain themselves in conversation, lest any uncharitable, boastful, or

angry words pass their lips. They should have a sincere, practical love of the ways of piety, virtue, religious observance, and duty. Lastly, they should avoid idleness and laziness, and strive to correct their known failings.

In doing all this, religious should have a resolute desire to avoid even the least sin. If such be their determination, accompanied by sufficient effort, not only will they be preserved from any grievous fall into sin, but their conduct will be rewarded by the gift of special graces to enable them to preserve purity of conscience.

How many consolations, and how much peace, will be experienced by religious who love purity of conscience, and who strive to attain to it! They will be among the happy servants of God who walk without blemish and who work justice. As true friends of the Sacred Heart, they will with joy draw waters from that sweet, saving fountain of all good.

39. Good Example

It is a saying that example is better than precept, but example joined with precept is better again. All may not be in a position to give precepts, but all may do good by example. Especially in the religious calling does good example flourish, and there above all it is expected.

When all the members of a community give good example, there will result from the edification mutually given a true spirit of union and peace; and the members will be as good links of a strong

chain, able to bear any strain to which it may be subjected. We will consider some of the benefits in a community which follow from good example. (*a*) Good example causes the fragrance of the religious virtues to be diffused; (*b*) it gives stability to religious observance; (*c*) it affords mutual edification and support; and (*d*) it wins esteem for the community.

(*a*) Not to love the religious virtues, and not to wish to see them flourish, would seem incompatible with being good religious. By the religious virtues we understand the virtues which religious conduct demands. To all the members of a community, and not to the Superiors only, it should afford comfort and satisfaction to see obedience, humility, charity, patience, meekness, modesty, and self-denial flourish. These virtues may be compared to sweet-scented blossoms. When they are all gathered into one splendid bouquet, how charming will that bouquet appear! and how fragrant will be its accumulated odours!

When the true religious spirit is manifested by good example on the part of all the members of a community, every member displaying in an especial manner some or other of the virtues just mentioned, the evidences of these on every side cannot but be attended with mutual edification, and with a strengthening of the bond of religion. Will there not be among the members a pious emulation, one imperceptibly urging on the other in the path of virtue? And will not this mutual good example effectively keep out of the community every bad

spirit destructive of religious virtue and peace? There will be no room in it for envy, contention, self-indulgence, insubordination, or undutifulness.

The giving of good example should not be left to only one or two members of a community—it is a duty which extends to all the members. St. Paul says: 'Let us follow after the things that are of peace: and keep the things that are of edification one towards another' (Rom. xiv. 19). If any religious think that they are not called upon to give good example, they deceive themselves: and under this false notion, they may fall short in fulfilling a serious duty. Although a brighter example is expected in the case of those who are in authority, and of the older members, yet all should in some way contribute to the general good example in the community, so that, as it were, the fragrance of virtue may come from every flower.

(*b*) In the second place, good example gives life and stability to religious observance. In communities where all the members recognize that they should give good example, there will be conformity of action. This conformity is required by religious observance, and it will be seen, not only in the regularity but also in the punctuality and readiness of attendance at the various exercises and duties of the day.

When there is a chronic listlessness about the attendance itself, and also about punctuality in attendance on the part of some of the members of a community, then observance may easily become lax; and it may even come to pass that little

account will be made of the remissness. As a consequence, laxity in observance may begin to gain ground, and may even eventually acquire lamentable proportions. The contrary will be the case when the duty of giving good example is both understood and complied with by all the members; for then will dutiful observance be the rule and not the exception. The one spring will set all the works in motion, with the consoling result that everything will work satisfactorily.

In the case of progress in virtue, the evidences may not always be clear, but in that of religious observance they should be manifest, for observance is a matter of outward conformity. In this latter case too, the force of example, be it good or otherwise, may be more distinctly noticed and traced. How meritorious, then, for religious will it be if by their good example they help to make observance flourish!

(*c*) When good example is given by all, it will tend to the edification and support of all; and religious life will be vigorous in communities where this is witnessed. Then may it be said: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Ps. cxxxii. 1). The religious will be of help to one another, for union gives strength.

How would it be in military discipline if a number of soldiers disregarded the word of command? There would soon be disorganization. But when all obey promptly, the movements are carried out with order and precision. This result is attained by

a general compliance, which affords mutual support, and promotes combined action. Thus should it be in the holy state of religion. All the members should be loyal to rule and observance, and should by their loyalty give good example. Then would a holy discipline flourish, a healthy spirit prevail, and mutual edification be given, and then would compliance with the community regulations become easy to all.

(*d*) Finally, the good example given in a community will win for it the esteem of externs. The fragrance of the sweet-scented flowers in a garden is carried outside the garden enclosure. So, too, will the sweet odour (Ecclus. xxxix. 18) of good example and of mutual edification be diffused abroad outside the religious community in which they flourish, and it will win for it respect and esteem.

A community in which observance is not maintained will be found fault with by secular persons; not perhaps by those whose too-familiar intercourse, or too-frequent visits, may in part be the cause of the want of religious observance, but by others who rightly expect in all religious the example of fidelity to duty. The intercourse with externs which is objectionable is that which mostly arises from personal attachment, and not from any motive or idea of spiritual benefit; and such intercourse is often spiritually hurtful.

A fervent community will be held in respect, and it will do much good. It will, moreover, draw to itself useful vocations. Secular persons will not fail to notice the mutual charity and edification existing

in it, and the spectacle will enhance their appreciation of religious life, and of religion itself which fosters this life and its virtues. Religion is the stem from which, as beautiful blossoms, these virtues spring, and by which they are nourished.

From the foregoing considerations it should appear how beneficial in a community, and to it, good example should be. Where good example is universal, the cause of religion will be advanced; and it may be said that thus God will be glorified, the Church will be edified, and religious will be assisted to attain the perfection of their holy calling.

40. Disedification.

One of the obstacles to perfection experienced by religious is disedification. Notwithstanding the many helps of grace, and the wise prescriptions of the rule, there will always be in a community a certain amount of disedification to contend with. It may cause some religious to take scandal, and to be more censorious than is just or charitable; or disedification may prove infectious, and bring others into faulty ways. Our Lord said: 'Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come' (St. Matt. xviii. 7). Owing to human weakness scandals may at times be found even in religion; but there will always be the lesser kind of scandal which we call disedification.

If religious have not themselves a proper sense of what their holy calling demands in them, as to their spirit, character, and conduct; and if they have not

themselves an effective interest in their own spiritual progress, they will in various ways be wanting in true religiousness, and give disedification. Will they even be conscious that they do so, and that therefore they should correct their ways? Will they ever reflect that, as far as possible, they should repair any harm caused by their conversations and conduct?

We will consider some of the faults which cause disedification; namely, (*a*) open breaches of the rule and of obedience, (*b*) faults against charity and patience, (*c*) secret breaches of the rule, and (*d*) fault-findings with Superiors and their arrangements.

(*a*) All the members of a community should be equally zealous for observance of rule, for it tends to the common good, as well as to the advantage of every member individually. Observance of rule is one of the chief signs of the spiritual well-being of a community, and every member expects in the rest faithfulness in this observance. The same dutifulness as is looked for in the case of observance of rule is also expected when the Superior gives any command, or requires compliance with any regulation.

This being so, if any member of the community is seen to disregard what is enjoined, the non-compliance cannot fail to be noticed. Is it, however, noticed with satisfaction and approval? Judgment should prudently be suspended while a reasonable cause or excuse is sought to explain the non-compliance. If no satisfactory reason be found, what view will then be taken of it? It will be regarded as an open fault, and the conduct will give some amount of disedifical tion.

This is the case when members of the community constantly disregard the rule of silence, when without adequate reason they fail to attend the religious exercises, when they give or receive things without permission, or when they go into the cells of others, or elsewhere where it is forbidden to go. As to the amount of disedification given, it will depend upon what the cause is, who gives it, and to whom it is given. Disedification is greater when given by a religious placed in authority, or by one who has been many years in religion. Usually it is more easily given to young religious, and in such cases it is greater. Faulty conduct may also be the cause of disedification to older religious; but it may not then make so deep an impression, or be so likely to lead to unhappy consequences.

Let it not therefore be thought that breaches of the rule, or disregard of the Superior's injunctions, harm only those who are at fault in regard of them; for they also shock those who witness them, and they may even cause other religious to imitate the bad example given.

(*b*) Religious may also give disedification by uncharitableness and by anger. Some have a propensity to mention any faultiness they may observe in their neighbour; and others, moved by jealousy or envy, speak disparagingly of their neighbour. Hence there are uncharitable remarks or conversations. It has been pointed out by moralists that such remarks and conversations injure three parties—namely, the one who speaks, the one spoken of, and the one who hears. When religious speak uncharit-

ably of their neighbour, do they reflect that they are perhaps giving disedification? They often cause others to coincide with their views, and they lead them to join in with what is said, and to add to it. Even though those who hear them take part themselves in the uncharitableness, they are yet disedified. Perhaps they say to themselves: 'How unkind it is to speak in this way! I myself would not like to be thus spoken of.'

At other times it is anger, or impatience, which causes the disedification. Some religious cannot bear the least contradiction, annoyance, or inconvenience. When they experience them, they display anger or impatience, as though not understanding what is required by the duty of self-restraint. They lose their temper and say hasty words. By their impatience, which leads them to say and do what they should not, they create a bad impression in the mind of others. Others are disedified, and they say to themselves: 'These religious have no self-control: we expected better things in religious.'

Sometimes, unfortunately, disedification in this way is given in the case where children are under the care of religious. How long will the painful impression made by it in their minds last? Perhaps for years.

Religious should therefore keep a guard over their manners and words, lest they disedify by uncharitable or hasty conduct or speech. They should constantly study to practise charity, meekness, and patience.

(*c*) There are sometimes secret breaches of the rule that give disedification to those who know of

them, or who have a well-founded suspicion of them. Religious who are guilty in this respect often have in the community friends or confidants to whom their secret or underhand conduct is known—such conduct being the doing of things which the Superior would not sanction. Faulty religious sometimes, while maintaining a show of exterior observance, do secretly what is forbidden by the rule. Their confidants are all the while disedified by their conduct; but they are too weak to show disapproval, or to strive to check the unworthy conduct; and even when the duty of fraternal correction requires that the matter should be reported to the Superior, this is not done.

(*d*) Finally, there are religious who disedify by finding fault with their Superiors, and with their arrangements. These religious will not perhaps speak openly before all the members of the community; but there are usually a few confidants to whom they unburden themselves and whom they endeavour to win to their views. This fault-finding may spring from rancour because of some correction or refusal, or from annoyance because they consider that their merits are not fully appreciated. The words of such dissatisfied religious are sometimes as infectious poison to their friends, and cause the spread of discontent. What disedification is thus given! Their friends, however, do not always join in interiorly with their views; for they detect and dislike the disrespect and undutifulness which these religious display towards their Superiors, and they are disedified by their conduct.

Enough has been said to show that religious should watch over their words and conduct, lest they should in any way disedify the members of their community, or others with whom they come into relation. Usually religious edify seculars, but do they always afford edification to one another?

When religious are conscious of having given disedification, do they, after their confession, strive to make amends, and repair as far as may be possible the disedification they have given? Do they endeavour to be afterwards regular and edifying? Let them bear in mind our Lord's injunction: 'So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven' (St. Matt. v. 16).

41. Obstacles to Interior Peace.

Peace is a blessing left us by our Divine Lord, one, too, which the apostles desired to see enjoyed by all Christians. St. Paul says: 'Rejoice in the Lord always. . . . Be nothing solicitous. . . . And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iv. 4-7); 'Above all these things have charity. . . . And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts' (Col. iii. 14, 15). Persons who serve God with all sincerity enjoy this blessing of interior peace. It is a blessing which religious expect to find in their holy calling.

We will consider some of the obstacles to the enjoyment of interior peace. These are (*a*) a want

of effort to correct what offends God, (*b*) relapse into faultiness, and (*c*) not being at peace with the neighbour.

(*a*) In the first place, there cannot be true peace where there are strife, disorder, and sense of insecurity. These obstacles to peace will be found where evil passion or evil inclinations have power over the soul, where irregular affections are entertained and not checked, and also when we are conscious that all is not as it should be with us in the fulfilment of our moral obligations, as when we fail notably in our duty.

Under such conditions as these, there is war in the soul. On the one side are the inspirations of grace, God's claims to our generous service, and the voice of our conscience striving to excite in us alarm and remorse, and to move us to correction and amendment. On the other side are weakness and want of courage—weakness in yielding to a perverse will, unhappily inclined to dissipation and folly, and want of courage to follow good impulses and the call of duty. What is this but strife in the soul between grace and a perverted nature, between good and evil? If we are overcome and led astray, we fall in the battle because we are not soldiers true and brave; and in this sad case there cannot be peace, for we fail to correspond with grace, and we may even be said to resist God's loving efforts for our sanctification. Holy Job said: 'Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace?' (Job ix. 4).

In the case of religious, when their conduct is unsatisfactory, if they make no serious effort to correct themselves, and to live up faithfully to the

requirements of their holy calling, how can they rightly hope that God will favour them with his choice blessings, one of which is interior peace? These blessings are for all who, faithful to duty, glory in the Cross of our Lord, and become 'a new creature,' living in newness of life, in fervour crucifying the old man with his deeds and evil inclinations. Such is the teaching of St. Paul, and he goes on to say: 'Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy' (Gal. vi. 16; also Rom. vi. 6; Col. iii. 9, 10).

If, then, religious fail to taste the blessing of interior peace because of persistent, uncorrected faultiness, we see how they thereby stand in their own light, and deprive themselves of a source of most desirable happiness. They should recognize that the remedy for this privation would be to endeavour seriously to correct their faults, and to fulfil faithfully the obligations of their holy state.

(*b*) In the second place, there will not be permanent peace for religious, if, owing to perversity, tepidity, or neglect, they fall back into their more notable failings.

How shall we describe relapse? Consider the following illustration of it: The time of fervour and of good resolutions goes by, and then we run again into danger, or we cease to employ the required effort to avoid our faults. Soon the fruits of repentance are once more destroyed. We thought we had risen, but now through our own fault we have fallen again. The old wounds are re-opened, and a sense of being in an unsatisfactory spiritual condition

creeps over us. We consequently begin to feel discouraged, and we may finally fall into a state of heedlessness. Everything is now ripe for continued faultiness. Where are now the spiritual vigour, the determined effort, and the holy constancy, which belong to God's faithful servants and Christ's brave soldiers? They have left us, and we are again weak and inconstant, and we relapse into our former faultiness.

When this is the case with religious, how shall they expect to retain interior peace? Through their own perversity or negligence, they themselves open the door of their soul once more to their spiritual enemies. Will not these enemies become even more exacting and tyrannical than they were before they were first driven out? (St. Matt. xii. 45). Perhaps the relapse of these religious even casts a doubt upon the sincerity of their previous conversion. There cannot be solid peace where there is misgiving.

When religious continue to repeat notable faults, serious results may follow; for they may acquire a habit of faultiness, and may cease to relish spiritual things. If, unhappily, such results do follow, the religious will gradually depart farther and farther from the path of interior peace—and they may even become indifferent about it.

(*c*) We come now, in the third place, to another obstacle to interior peace, namely, not being at peace with our neighbour.

When there is a breach of charity, the bond of peace suffers. Peace and charity share the throne

in the soul of Christ's faithful followers. St. Paul says: 'With all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. iv. 2, 3).

When there is a breach of charity, anger and contention are likely to follow, and these faults dissipate and destroy the spirit of peace. For how shall peace be enjoyed, when the mind is disturbed by unkind and unjust thoughts and judgments, and when the heart is embittered with uncharitable and resentful feelings? Some religious who carefully avoid breaches of rule in matters that do not bind under sin are yet often guilty of breaches of charity that are not without sin. Breaches of charity cause both exterior and interior disturbance, and peace will not be restored until return to a condition of charity is effected. Do faulty religious reflect sufficiently upon the necessity of their living strictly and constantly in the practice of charity, even at some cost to their feelings and prejudices?

When religious do not experience interior peace, let them see if they do not themselves place obstacles to it. Let them correct themselves, and strive to live more truly for God, and then see if this blessing will not follow. When they have found the way of peace, let them not depart from it; for interior peace will sustain and encourage them under the trials of life, and give them a relish for God's holy service in the pursuit of their vocation.

42. Tepidity.

Our faith, and our love of God, must have their place in all our service of God. It is, however, possible for us to lose a lively faith, and possible, too, for our love to languish. This cannot happen without detriment to our spiritual well-being, and without some degree of danger of serious consequences. Various sad results do actually occur when we become tepid.

Tepidity is one of the spiritual disorders which account for the unsatisfactory lives of many religious. It is a condition of life into which those fall (*a*) who underrate God's claims upon their generous service, and who underestimate (*b*) the perfection which their state of life demands, and (*c*) the effort to be made to labour for their sanctification.

(*a*) The ideal which the tepid set before themselves is wanting in nobility of conception, in grandeur of character, in beauty of detail, and in fulness of scope. It may be described as a dwarfed spirituality, half formed, half fed. In order to reach this imperfect ideal, there is little demand upon self-restraint, self-correction, or sustained effort, without which not even a medium of spirituality will be reached.

Tepid religious endeavour to avoid grievous sin, grave dereliction of duty, giving great scandal, or causing serious trouble: but such limiting of wrong-doing is very far from being the same thing as aiming at perfection. In such conduct, there is an absence of true devotedness, and of a sincere hatred

of what is faulty. May we say, then, that such service of God meets His claims upon those whom He has deigned to call to aim at perfection in the religious life? May we not say that tepid religious seem to ask God to accept as their service a life stamped with self-seeking, self-indulgence, faulty observance, disrelish for piety, inordinate affections, and careless routine in receiving the holy sacraments? If such be their kind of life, how unworthy and ungrateful it must appear! When religious fall into a condition of tepidity, their life becomes one of general faultiness.

(*b*) In the second place, tepid religious underestimate the perfection which their calling demands. This perfection is set forth in the holy rule of every Institute, and it should be the aim of every religious to seek to attain it by devotedness to rule. Grace, however, is given in different measure to every religious, so that some religious may be more perfect than others; but, if some are tepid, it may not be said that their unsatisfactory condition is owing to any limiting of, or denial of, grace. It should rather be said that, if they are tepid, it is because they have not corresponded with grace, and because, of their own fault, they have not employed the means afforded them to enable them to be fervent.

The service of God in religion demands self-renunciation, and zeal for observance and for every point of duty. The virtues expected in religious are obedience, love of poverty and of chastity, humility, meekness, charity, and patience. The life of a good

religious is one of piety, and of devotedness to duty. Happy are the fervent who strive to meet these demands of their holy calling! Tepidity lays its clammy hand on everything. It undermines zeal, it shirks duty, it avoids what is arduous, it stagnates energy, it lessens regularity, it neglects precautions, it favours laxity, and it loves ease and inaction. All this militates against the attainment of the perfection which the rule of an Institute sets before its members. If only the knowledge of their unhappy condition caused tepid religious to lament it, and to seek to return to fervour, amendment would follow. But religious labouring under the yoke of tepidity, even when conscious of its disastrous results, seldom make any effectual effort to throw off the yoke; and this affords a further proof of the danger of tepidity. We may put to these religious two questions. Do they underestimate the perfection to which God calls them? or do they disregard the obligations which they know their calling imposes upon them? In either case they are at fault, and their faultiness cannot but have consequences detrimental to their peace of mind and to their spiritual well-being.

(*c*) In the third place, tepid religious underestimate the effort to be made in labouring for their sanctification. This effort comprises compliance with certain devout practices, exactitude in exterior observance, conscientiousness in regard of all that affects the vows of religion, purification of the intention or motives of action, guardianship over the senses, readiness in obedience, due consideration for the neighbour, and finally, devotion in receiving

the holy sacraments, and in performing the religious exercises. Tepid religious will not always be equal to the effort which all this demands. Perhaps they would fain believe that so much is not demanded of them; but such a belief would betoken an unwillingness to labour with energy for their sanctification. They perhaps find the ways of piety, observance, and duty tedious: but they do not complain of tediousness or monotony in what regards relaxation and repose. At times are not tepid religious met with who seem to have lost a lively interest in the work of their sanctification? Perhaps they say that they do not aim at anything very high, and that they will be satisfied if they only succeed in just getting into heaven; and they may add that they do not feel equal to the effort and constancy manifested by the fervent. Such religious are to be pitied—they should not be imitated. They may even fail to keep the low path they mark out for themselves—they may yet descend by degrees to a lower one.

Does not the study of the ways and fruits of tepidity yield conviction both of its danger and of its unbecomingness, especially in the case of religious? In what direction does it lead? It leads to neglect, carelessness, dissatisfaction, and discouragement, and it causes disedification. It is attended by much spiritual loss, and it stamps the life of religious with faultiness. To those who, through tepidity, fall into serious faults, our Lord says: 'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth' (Apoc. iii. 16). According as our Lord withdraws from the tepid,

and ceases to protect them with His special providence, the Spirit of Darkness draws nearer to them to tempt them, and to lead them into greater disorders, and they gradually grow more lax. We must therefore regard the path of tepidity as a downward and dangerous one—one which all sincere religious should carefully avoid.

Religious who feel that they cannot do enough to please God will not offer Him a service in which they do as little as they can; they will ever seek to offer Him a devoted and generous service, one sanctified by their religious fervour. It will bring them a full measure of the blessings of their calling, and they will taste the sweetness of loving God.

43. Discontent.

Devotedness to the religious life supposes a readiness to fulfil its obligations, and to bear patiently and courageously the trials incidental to it. Where this devotedness is wanting, there will be a disposition to choose what is easy and agreeable, to shirk what is troublesome or difficult, and to be discontented when the office or duty imposed, and the arrangements made by Superiors, are not quite to one's liking. This spirit of discontent which is met with, in lesser or greater degree, in communities, is a token, not of perfection, but of imperfection. It is a failing allied to self-love and unsubmissiveness, and it is attended by no good or gain of any kind.

Religious who are discontented make themselves miserable, and they lose much merit. They often

cause sorrow or anxiety to their Superiors, and they may lose the confidence and respect of other members of the community. It not infrequently happens, also, that these discontented religious seek to gain others over to their views. Then, if they succeed in this, discontent is spread. It may even happen, when Superiors try to conciliate them, and to remove the cause of dissatisfaction, that they are not always successful. Sometimes they fail in their conciliatory efforts, because the religious are of a discontented nature, and nothing will please them.

We will examine some of the causes of this spirit of discontent. Religious are discontented (*a*) because special notice is not taken of them and of their work, especially if they think that others are more favoured than themselves: or (*b*) because they deem themselves unequal to the duties to which they are appointed; or (*c*) because they imagine that enough consideration is not bestowed upon them as to their health: or finally (*d*) because they are not satisfied with their Superior.

(*a*) It happens sometimes that religious feel discontented because special notice is not taken of them and of their work. We have to recognize that all religious are not of the same temperament: some require more help and encouragement than others. Some seem unable to work satisfactorily if they do not receive a certain amount of notice. This demand for notice and encouragement may even at times be unreasonable. On the other hand, there are Superiors who expect that duties will be fulfilled from a sense of duty only, and who do not make

allowance for any natural craving for notice and encouragement. It is under Superiors such as these that a spirit of discontent sometimes creeps into communities. The Superiors, indeed, may not be aware that they give cause for it. Their want of knowledge of the demands of human nature in this matter, or their want of consideration for this craving, may not be attributed to them as a fault on their part; but on the part of subjects who manifest this discontent there may be some fault. There would be fault, if this discontent were not restrained and corrected. Religious should strive to work purely for God.

Discontent becomes deeper and more firmly set when religious consider that other members of the community are more favoured than themselves. There may be some error in so thinking, or there may be some satisfactory reason to explain why such favour is shown. Religious should therefore correct their discontent. On examination it might be found to arise from envy, jealousy or wounded pride. It will not exist where religious are humble and charitable, and zealous only for God's glory.

(*b*) Another cause of discontent is a grievance, real or imaginary, about the allotment of offices or duty. It is for Superiors to judge what has to be done, and who should do it. If religious deem themselves incapable of the charge appointed to them, or if they consider that they have not received just treatment, they should make their representations respectfully to the Superiors, and abide by the decisions thereupon given. Some make their

grievance known to everyone except to the very person—namely, the Superior—to whom, if real, it should be exposed. The grievance is at times only an imaginary one. This is the case when it is want of zeal and devotedness which really causes religious to pretend inability, or to raise difficulties. The case occurs, therefore, when under various pretences religious seek to be relieved of duty that is arduous, or that demands application, and this duty will then have to be imposed upon others. Such conduct is ungenerous. As a rule, discontent arising from the distribution of labour or duty may be traced to a spirit of laziness, ungenerosity, self-seeking, or rebellion.

(*c*) We now come to consider discontent arising from a sense of being neglected in the matter of health. This matter touches us so intimately that if we give way to discontent in believing that we do not receive due consideration, our mind will easily become soured and embittered. Then our complaints will be frequent, petulant, and even unreasonable. It will be difficult to find a remedy for our discontent.

Religious who give way to discontent because they fancy their health is not sufficiently cared for deem they are justified in their murmuring and dissatisfaction; but in many cases, if unprejudiced investigation were made, it would be seen that the Superior is doing everything that could reasonably be expected. At times there may, indeed, be some forgetfulness or error of judgment on the part of Superiors, but this should not be

attributed to intentional oversight or neglect. When such is evidently the case, and when respectful representation of the matter to the Superiors fails to obtain the desired results, then all that can be counselled is that the aggrieved members of the community should pray for patience, and for grace to take up their cross with resignation. It should, however, be borne in mind that sickness and indisposition often cloud the mind, and cause persons to judge of matters in an unreasonable way.

(*d*) We come now to consider, lastly, discontent which results from religious not being satisfied with their Superior. There may not always be sufficient cause for this discontent—the fault may not be the Superior's. On the part of the subjects there may be dislike, or some want of dutifulness; there may even be arrogance and self-conceit, or other faults, leading them not to see the good points in their Superior's character and conduct. Or, again, the Superior may have corrected them for various kinds of faultiness, and they may not have received the correction in a proper spirit. Sometimes religious are met with who have a habit of criticizing and finding fault with everything done by Superiors. This unfortunate habit cannot but tend to destroy in religious the respect and affection which their Superiors are entitled to expect.

At times, indeed, there may be faultiness of one kind or another on the part of Superiors; but this should only bring into fuller display the virtue of the subjects. In no case is it pretended that Superiors

have attained to perfection, and that they are therefore faultless.

Religious should not allow themselves to be ruled by their natural antipathies: nature must be schooled by religion. Higher principles should guide both the affections and the conduct of all religious—of Superiors and subjects. Then would there be guidance and force to correct this kind of discontent.

If religious permit themselves to be carried away by discontent with their Superior, this faulty spirit will undermine the true religious spirit, and will suggest various pretexts for laxity in observance, and for disregard of many of the Superior's arrangements. There will be disloyalty. This kind of discontent may lead to wrong notions regarding authority, and therefore to breaches of the respect and of the submission which God demands for all rightly-constituted Superiors. Religious should dutifully respect both the person and the office of their Superior.

Religious should regard the spirit of discontent as the enemy of their peace and an obstacle to religious perfection. The more devoted they are to God's will, the more faithfully they carry their cross; and the more earnestly they study the ways of virtue and perfection, the more resolutely will they strive to correct all unreasonable and unreligious fault-finding and discontent.

44. Discouragement.

Sometimes the noblest undertakings are abandoned through discouragement. Discouragement, which should always be treated as a temptation, has a depressing effect. Before now it has led persons aspiring to the religious life to turn back to secular pursuits. It is at times felt even by religious who have spent years in religion. It may be used by Satan as a weapon to undermine religious devotedness, or to check religious in their efforts to correct their failings and to acquire the virtues proper to their calling. When Satan seems to whisper: 'You cannot do this. You cannot overcome this failing. You cannot be better than you are. You cannot maintain fervour always'—what is this but a temptation to discouragement? It should be rejected like every other evil temptation.

We will consider that discouragement may arise, (*a*) through a sense of weakness and inability, (*b*) through a dread of difficulty, (*c*) through the persistence of temptation, and (*d*) through a remembrance of failure in the past.

(*a*) Whether discouragement arises from the suggestion of Satan, or from our own faint-heartedness, it should be regarded as a temptation, and it should be dealt with as such. If this kind of temptation should come to us through a sense of our weakness, and of our inability to fulfil what our calling demands, or the duties imposed upon us, we should carefully examine the situation. We may be under some delusion; and we should never willingly

abandon what is good, nor permit ourselves to be deterred from doing good, under the influence of a delusion. We may resolve the case in this way: Does it appear to us, as far as we are able to judge, that the good should be done, and that we are called upon to do it, or that it would be well for us to do it? If so, we should undertake it, and we should ask God to help us to accomplish it; and we should then be animated with a firm confidence that God will help us.

We are right in believing that we are weak, and in mistrusting our own selves; but our faith and trust in God should inspire us with courage. We should look to God with a firm confidence that He will help us, and bring to a successful issue all His works in us, and all those lawfully demanded of us. Discouragement would manifest a want of this confidence.

Religious should take a lesson from St. Paul, who said: 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content therewith. . . I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 11, 13). God will also strengthen religious, and make them equal to the labours, difficulties, and sacrifices connected with their works and calling.

(*b*) In the second place, religious may be tempted to discouragement through a dread of the difficulties that they encounter or foresee. Once more they should examine how the case really stands. They should ask themselves if the difficulties are real or imaginary, and if their own dread of them does not proceed from cowardice, or from a want of generosity. Too often, when any duty is imposed, a

certain timidity, or even unwillingness, causes religious either to fear all kinds of imaginary difficulties or not to see an easy and reasonable way of surmounting those that are real. If the duty imposed has to be accomplished, religious may feel sure that, notwithstanding the difficulties connected with it, a way will be found to accomplish it.

If, on examination, the fault proves to be one of cowardice, it only remains to correct it by assuming a more becoming attitude of determination and confidence. The greater religious find the obstacles to good, and the more arduous the labour imposed, so much the greater will be the honour and merit of their accomplishing what has to be done. Cowardice will not be a satisfactory pretext for shirking duty, nor should it be received as an excuse for discouragement. The prophet says: 'Strengthen ye the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted, Take courage, and fear not' (Isa. xxxv. 3, 4; see also Heb. xii. 12).

But, if the fault be one of want of generosity, then should religious urge themselves to a more generous spirit by considering God's bountifulness towards themselves, and the bright example of so many religious who deem themselves privileged when any arduous undertaking is confided to them. When God's service demands of religious the performance of an arduous duty, there is thus offered them an opportunity of showing their gratitude to God by their devotedness in performing it. They should correct their want of generosity, and strive to animate their courage by such considerations as

those just suggested. Discouragement will not inspire them with any noble sentiments, nor will it move them to any generous effort.

(*c*) Discouragement results sometimes from the persistence of temptation. God does not promise that we shall not be tempted, but only that temptation shall not be too great for us to overcome it (1 Cor. x. 13). The persistence of temptation, or its frequent recurrence, should lead us to believe that we have not been overcome; and that it is our resistance which provokes further effort on the part of the Tempter.

If religious study well this subject of temptations, they will derive from the study much encouragement. We note how persistent Satan was when he tempted our Lord, and how on that occasion he used various wiles. The servant must not expect to fare better than the Divine Master. If we were to take away temptation from life, we should lose many opportunities of acquiring supernatural merit; and our virtue, not being tested, might be doubted as to its sterling qualities.

The persistence of temptations, far from discouraging us, should stimulate us to determination and effort in dealing with the Tempter. Discouragement, weariness, and want of confidence, weaken our lines of resistance and defence, and give the Tempter an advantage over us. But if we continue to offer resolute resistance, calling God to our aid by fervent prayer, we need not fear. By God's grace we shall gain the victory, and be like the man of whom David says: 'He shall not be confounded

when he shall speak to his enemies in the gate' (Ps. cxxvi. 5).

(*d*) Finally, another cause for discouragement is the remembrance of failure in the past. Religious should bear in mind how it came to pass that they failed in the past. Was it not because they exposed themselves to danger, or because they did not use the necessary precautions or means to protect themselves from falls?

While they are now acting more resolutely and more prudently, it is not to be believed that they will fall again, even though by frequent falls a bad habit may have been acquired. Religious should exercise their faith in the efficacy of Divine grace. Grace will enable them to overcome even the most inveterate habits, and it will turn their heart from every desire of evil, and inspire them with a horror and hatred of it. These happy results of grace should be sought by frequent petitions for God's help; since God measures out such graces according to the fervour with which we seek them.

God, Who converted Mary Magdalene, Augustine, and countless others who had perhaps sinned more grievously than we have, will not abandon us to the power of our spiritual enemies, if only we call upon Him. This assurance, which is based upon Divine promises, should enable religious to put away any discouragement arising from the remembrance of past falls, so long as they are determined by God's grace to do better, and to act in a manner more conformable with the holiness of their vocation.

From whatever cause discouragement may come,

religious should ever combat it. If they do so, the dark cloud will pass away, and a more hopeful spirit will prevail. Discouragement is destructive of healthy, vigorous, and persistent religiousness; it tends to tepidity and negligence; and it impedes spiritual progress. In the pursuit of their holy vocation religious should be prepared for difficulties and temptations; but they should ever remember that God knows how to turn these trials to the welfare of His elect. With unbounded trust in God, then they should go forward and not look back. Let them say confidently to Him, with holy David: 'Let them trust in Thee who know Thy name: for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee, O Lord' (Ps. ix. 11).

45. Self-Correction.

Religious should have a zeal for their spiritual progress. They should not leave to their Superiors all the urging which nature needs to move them onwards: they should themselves employ the effort which progress demands, and they should have a zeal for their own correction.

There are, unhappily, religious who make an idol of themselves, and this leads them into much faultiness. Such religious do not direct their conduct aright; for often they fail to ask themselves what God demands of them, what a due consideration for their neighbour requires, and what the rule and religiousness demand of them. They seem to consult rather what will suit themselves—their ease, convenience, predilections, whims and personal aims—thus

showing that their thoughts and efforts are centred in themselves. What imperfection there is in this! What hope is there of their correction? Usually they resent any advice or admonition as to their faults: they wish to be left alone (Ecclus. xxxii. 21). Yet in truth it would be best for these religious that their Superiors should know their faultiness, and should find them willing to be admonished, so that it might be corrected. This, however, they do not desire. Solomon says: 'He that loveth correction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is foolish' (Prov. xii. 1). When, unhappily, religious are so minded as not to wish to correct their own faultiness, it is manifest that they are not sufficiently heedful in the matter of their spiritual welfare.

There is such a thing as self-correction. Correction to be profitable must be our own work. Superiors and spiritual advisers may indeed point out our faults and suggest remedies for them; but the work of correction, to be effectual, must have our own determined and willing co-operation. We will consider that self-correction regards (*a*) a proper knowledge of our faults, (*b*) a determination to correct them, and (*c*) a proper method in doing it.

(*a*) There are persons who do not see their own faults, and who do not wish to know them. They perhaps pretend that they are all that they can be expected to be. Persons of this self-complacent, and perhaps self-opinionated, class will not make spiritual progress. Others who aspire to religious perfection view things differently, for they are ever

lamenting their own faultiness ; and moreover they consider that other kinds of knowledge will not profit them much, if at the same time they are ignorant of their own faults. Therefore in their meditations are they careful to examine their conduct in the light of the lessons under consideration, and they are happy to discover their weaknesses, so that they may seek a remedy for them. In approaching the holy Sacrament of Penance, too, they search out their faults, and take note of the number of times they have committed them. Although, even with this zeal for self-correction, they may not be fully aware of all their faultiness, they at any rate do not wish to close their eyes to it : they sincerely desire to discover it.

Without the knowledge of our faults there will not be any attempt to correct them. This knowledge prepares the way for correction. Religious should wish to have it, and should strive to acquire it. They should study to see if their faults are casual or habitual, and under what circumstances they fall into them. They, moreover, should know which is their predominant failing. To know one's enemy is the first step towards dealing him a blow in the struggle to overcome him.

(*b*) Self-correction will not be successful, if the knowledge of one's faultiness be not accompanied by the desire and determination to correct it. If there are persons who do not wish to know their faults, there are also others who do not wish to correct their faults. They have no zeal in the matter of self-correction.

Having acquired a knowledge of their faults, religious should be resolutely determined to struggle with them, and to correct them. Then will Divine aid come to their assistance, to inspire courage, to maintain their resolution, and to instigate them to the needed effort. They should not be disheartened by the number or character of their faults, or by their being habitual. Their desire should be to put away from themselves whatever—be it little or great —impedes their spiritual progress, and thus keeps them from a more perfect service of God.

Many persons are only very imperfect penitents; for although they confess their sins, and make promises of amendment, yet when the occasion for determined action arrives, they fail and they fall again. There is something wanting in their determination. Self-correction demands a determination that is motived by a sincere love of God, and hatred of sin, and that is prepared to meet opposition, and to use effort—a determination, too, that is sustained by prayer, and by a firm confidence in God, accompanied by self-mistrust. A determination that is not supernaturally motived and supernaturally sustained will fail at the critical moment.

(*c*) We come now to consider the practical part of self-correction. The knowlege of our faults, and our determination to correct them, must lead to some effort and action on our part.

Three things manifest earnestness in the duty of self-correction—namely (1) the avoidance of danger, (2) resistance of temptation, and (3) greater fidelity to duty.

1. In the first place, there must be a careful avoidance of the occasions of sins, without which relapse must surely occur. Thus, when faults arise from inordinate attachments, or from associating with disaffected and non-observant religious, or from too intimate or too frequent association with secular persons; our good resolutions will prove useless, unless we cease to encourage those faulty attachments, and unless we cease to associate intimately with those religious or seculars who lead us into faulty ways—such as the neglect of community observances, or into other faults against the vows or rules. The method which self-correction demands in these cases is one of avoidance of danger, and even, according to our Lord's expression, one of cutting off the hand or the foot, or of casting from us our very eye (St. Matt. xviii. 8, 9). Our confessions and purposes of amendment will be fruitless and insincere without a determined and continued avoidance of the occasions of our faults when they are such as those we are now considering.

2. There must also be resolute resistance when we encounter temptation. Faults follow when religious are not sufficiently guarded against temptations. When there is unguardedness, it is all the more disastrous when the temptations affect the predominant weakness. Self-correction demands earnest and continued resistance and prayer in the time of temptation.

3. In the third place, religious should give proof of their desire of self-correction and amendment by devotedness to the obligations of their calling, and

by a spirit of piety and observance. Therefore should they bring themselves to perform not only *some* of their spiritual exercises, but *all* of them, and to seek the required permissions not only at times, but always. They should strive, moreover, to practise silence and recollection, not as if these observances were irksome, or unworthy of a free mind, but willingly, and with due appreciation of their benefit.

Religious should love the discipline of the religious life, not only in greater matters, but even in the least, viewing in the least observances an intimate relation with those that are more important, and with their own spiritual progress. Self-correction must not be superficial; it should penetrate into the soul, so as to bring it to just, dutiful, and holy views and determinations, leading it to aspire to the full scope of the perfection to which God calls it. Thus understood, self-correction will lead religious to strive to avoid even the least wilful faults, and to fulfil even the least of their obligations.

Religious should not reject any extraneous help to their amendment. When help is offered by the admonitions and corrections of Superiors, subjects should be ready to acknowledge the religious motives that prompt such dutiful action on the part of their Superiors. The Superiors have to consider both the good of those whom they feel bound to admonish, and the welfare of the community and its works. At times Superiors are the 'go-between' between others who are actually affected and the religious whose conduct is faulty. How painful it is

to them to meet with resentment, when they are thus constrained by duty to offer these admonitions!

Religious who are inspired with zeal for their own perfection, and seek the ways of peace, will ever battle with their faultiness and imperfections. The more earnest and constant they are in studying self-correction, and in labouring for it in a practical manner, the more abundantly will they draw upon themselves God's blessing and aid, and taste the sweetness of a holy peace.

46. Triumph in the Warfare of Life.

In vain will our Lord have died for us, and in vain shall we have spent our life, if in the end we fail to triumph in the warfare of life. The victory of grace, the triumph of the Cross and of the spirit, must close our career if we would be saved. Our daily contests with the devil, the world, and the flesh, should lead up to this final triumph. What hope, then, is there for men who do not fight, or for those who are overcome in their daily contests?

Religious, as valiant soldiers of Christ, should be found in the van of the army. They should be skilled in spiritual warfare, and should gain many victories. If they would triumph in the warfare of life, (*a*) they must ever wear their armour, (*b*) they must be ever on the watch, and (*c*) they must use the means necessary to gain the victory, ever following their Divine Leader and trusting in Him.

(*a*) Religious may be said to wear their armour, when they are animated with a lively faith, and seek

strength through prayer. In the light of a lively faith they see the importance of the conflict, its issues, the character of their foes, and what is at stake. The important issues, namely, victory or defeat, salvation or damnation, are ever clearly before them. There is no moment in which a decisive step in one direction or in the other may not be taken; no moment, therefore, in which by their perversity they may not be lost.

In this conflict there are great possibilities; but all will be well, if only religious ever wear the armour of faith, seek God's help in prayer, and fight the good fight. Will they allow the infernal foe to allure them to their destruction with empty pleasures, perishable goods, painted toys, and vain distinctions? Will they desert God's holy service, and become slaves of the world, of avarice, of irregular affections, of vices or evil passions? Would there be any heroism in such base desertion? No; true religious aided by grace will not permit themselves to be overcome, and to be thus led astray. They have been trained in the ways of virtue and piety, and they recognize the evil of sin and the dangers of worldliness. They are resolved to combat the enemy and to triumph.

True religious are not thoughtless or undutiful soldiers of Christ. They see in their spiritual foes, and in every spirit opposed to godliness, enemies with whom they must hold no parley—enemies openly or insidiously bent on leading them to their destruction.

While religious are thus animated with a lively

faith, following its guidance in combating their spiritual foes, the armour they wear is, according to St. Paul, the armour of God (Eph. vi. 13). God's own power shields and protects them, and they are rendered invincible. If they were to put off this armour, and trust to their own strength in the combat, they would soon discover their weakness, and they would be overcome. In the first place, then, religious should triumph in the warfare of life by faith and prayer.

(*b*) In the second place, if religious would be secure, they must be on the watch. Vigilance is necessary in every kind of warfare. Religious must watch (1) lest their own sloth, irregular affections, or evil propensities, should lead them astray, or cause them to fall into ways of neglect; (2) lest they should unwisely expose themselves to temptation, or wilfully run into danger; (3) lest they should adopt lax principles, or acquire habits of undutifulness; and (4) lest the Evil Spirit should deceive them with wrong and misleading ideas and suggestions. See then what scope there is for vigilance.

1. It is not enough that religious should be on their guard against Satan, for they have also to keep a watch over their own heart and ways. Danger lies within as well as without us. Religious may be met with who are perhaps too ready to accommodate themselves to what is in conformity with their own promptings and leanings, even when these are opposed to the suggestions of a wise discretion, to the requirements of their rule, and possibly to the claims of the Divine Law itself. Or, again, perhaps

sloth may lead them to invent pretexts for neglecting what duty demands of them. Good religious will be careful to examine the bearings and leadings of their affections and inclinations. If they are not on their guard, they may be deceived, and may fall into many sins or imperfections.

2. There is reason for saying that religious particularly should be on their guard against exposing themselves to the danger of sin, and against temptations; for, by their training, and by the special attraction to holiness attached to their vocation, they may be said to be highly sensitized, and to be therefore rendered more sensitive to rude shocks. If they wilfully expose themselves to danger, they thereby run out from their position of safety, and this is the first step to disaster. The shock they experience unnerves them; and before they fully realize the extent of their peril, they compromise themselves, and then may follow the fall.

As to temptations, religious must expect to be frequently annoyed by them, since Satan's efforts against them must be chiefly by the means of temptations. Our Lord says to religious as well as to all His followers: 'Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation' (St. Matt. xxvi. 41). Unwise, then, are religious who are unguarded, and who expose themselves to temptations and to dangers of sin. How may they with any assurance count upon victory?

3. If religious would triumph in the warfare of life, they must be staunch in their principles and conduct. These must be formed according to the

best teaching. Lax principles are a danger with far-reaching consequences. They pervert the true idea of what religion demands. 'By their fruits you shall know them' (St. Matt. vii. 16). Remiss observance, undutiful conduct in relation with Superiors, and laxity in fulfilment of duties, give evidence of lax principles.

4. Satan, too, will try to pervert religious by instilling into their mind erroneous ideas and evil promptings. Religious must be on their guard against his cunning deceits. If they are staunch in principle, and act as good sentinels, they will be spared many annoyances and many falls; and their vigilance will prove a powerful factor in many triumphs.

(*c*) In the third place, we have to consider that certain things must be done if we would secure for ourselves triumph in the warfare of life. Triumph will not ensue of itself without effort on our part. Our Lord said: 'The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away' (St. Matt. xi. 12).

Besides what we have already considered—besides following the light of faith, being prompt in prayer, watching against our spiritual enemies, and avoiding dangers—religious should be careful to maintain a right order in their faculties and actions. They must therefore ever subject their affections and their senses to the control of reason and religion; and, moreover, seeing how weak, ungenerous, and fickle nature is, they should persevere in the use of vocal and mental prayer, in the study of

their religious obligations, and in the fervent frequentation of the holy sacraments. Then, in their exterior conduct, they must give the first place to what is of obligation, and not to what is only of devotion or of choice; consequently, they will not neglect their spiritual exercises. They must avoid independence of spirit and of action, and seek only to do what God demands of them, being ever firmly resolved not to oppose His designs. If this be their dutiful conduct, then may they entertain a trustful confidence that God will be with them in all their works and undertakings, and that, even if sensible consolations be wanting to them, His protecting arm will yet sustain them, and will bring them through all their cares and dangers safe and victorious.

What should be said of undutiful religious whose daily life is a history of spiritual defeats? who at the close of every day are perhaps less pleasing to God than at its dawn? Should they not lament their unfaithfulness, and have they not perhaps reason to fear the withdrawal of grace? Should they not seek to put an end to their faultiness? Let them look up to the Sacred Heart of their Divine Master inviting them to better ways and to greater zeal for their sanctification; and let them not delay their true conversion. But what joy and consolation are meted out by the Divine Giver of all good gifts to religious whose daily life is a history of watchfulness, effort, faithfulness, and triumph! They are making a good preparation for the final victory and for the heavenly crown.

47. Constancy and Perseverance.

Fickleness and inconstancy in maintaining fervour and dutifulness are indicative in religious of a want of due earnestness in the work of their sanctification. It is not enough for them only to live in religion; they should strive so to live that the religious character may be maintained and made manifest in them by a true spirit of religion and of pious zeal, permeating and inspiring both life and action. And in this there should be constancy and perseverance. Religious should put before themselves the example of daily renewal in fervour set by St. Paul, who said: 'Though our outward man is corrupted · yet the inward man is renewed day by day' (2 Cor. iv. 16).

We will consider that by constancy religious (*a*) give evidence of sincere religiousness, (*b*) consult their own highest interests, and (*c*) are comforted with the assurance of persevering in God's grace.

(*a*) When we see sinners frequently relapse into sin, two thoughts may strike us. One is that they cannot be very sincere in loving God; and the other, that they imperil their salvation and may yet die in their sins. Sometimes religious relapse even habitually into their faulty conduct. What should be thought of religious who seldom remain fervent and observant for any length of time, but who seem frequently to fall into a state of indifference about their religious obligations? Can we say that they give evidence of seeking to please God in all they do? or that they are living in religion in order to be more fervent in God's service than they

would be in the world? Do they fully realize their obligations? Do they dutifully avail themselves of them any graces attached to their calling? May they be considered 'Good stewards of the manifold grace of God'? (1 St. Pet. iv. 10). Finally, can we say that they are striving faithfully to correspond with God's designs in calling them to the religious state? These questions should not be deemed superfluous. All of them require an answer in the affirmative; but in the case of these inconstant religious, we hesitate to give this answer.

We thus hesitate, because we fear that religious who are wanting in constancy do not give satisfactory evidence of sincere religiousness. We fear that they are not sufficiently supernatural in their motives, and in the ends they place before themselves. We fear that they are not sufficiently assiduous in using the means of grace so abundantly provided in the holy state of religion. We fear that they are not sufficiently resolute in combating their spiritual enemies, and in removing the obstacles to their spiritual progress. We fear, finally, that they do not practically realize what God demands of them in return for His loving and bounteous providence. But what does all this mean, if not that we fear that they are wanting in sincere religiousness?

Other religious, constant in fervour, dutifulness and observance, show how sincerely they desire and seek to please God, and to live up to the requirements of their privileged vocation. The fruits of their constancy are the interior lights and movements of grace which give firmness to their religious

character, so that everyone sees that they are religious in spirit and conduct as well as by profession.

(*b*) In the second place, by constancy religious consult their own highest interests. What should be of greater interest to them than their sanctification and their spiritual well-being? Health and worldly goods also are blessings from God; but the loss of them is not an evil; for it may even be attended by much spiritual good, and it should therefore be reckoned profitable to the soul. Not so, however, would be any lessening of grace, any falling away from holiness, or any deprivation detrimental to spiritual well-being; for such losses as these are always prejudicial to one's real welfare. Now, these are the losses sustained by religious who are inconstant, and who often seem to be in a condition of indifference about the faithful fulfilment of the obligations of their holy calling.

Religious become inconstant when they weary of the continual strain of spiritual effort, when they meet with difficulties and opposition, when they habitually give in to laziness, self-indulgence, or sloth, and when they become discouraged owing to dryness or to the absence of sympathy. Their inconstancy does not afford any remedy or comfort. There is nothing heroic about it: it has, rather, the character of a surrender. It shows some degree of moral weakness, and it may even prepare the way for continued faultiness.

Such inconstancy in religious gives no stimulus to zeal in themselves or in others, and at times it

causes disedification. These considerations lead us to ask what profit they expect to derive from their inconstancy. Do they not, as a matter of fact, stand in the way of their own highest interests? While we behold the fervent and constant pursuing their way courageously, patiently, placidly, we see the inconstant disturbed, discontented, and uneasy. In the meantime, too, they deprive themselves of many spiritual blessings, and they bring into religion a careless, dissatisfied spirit which is foreign to it. This is regrettable. It is not thus with fervent religious, for these by constancy promote the work of their sanctification, and establish their spiritual well-being on a firm footing, and thus they consult their own highest interests.

(*c*) Finally, by constancy religious merit to enjoy an assurance of persevering in God's grace, and of securing their heavenly crown. How comforting is the joy that accompanies this assurance!—to hope firmly and trustingly that God's promises will be realized, namely, the hundred-fold, and the possession of life everlasting (St. Matt. xix. 29). In trouble, hardship, and distress, how consoling do fervent religious find it to think of the glory, bliss, and repose which await them in Heaven; how inspiriting, too, in the battle of life to look forward to the heavenly triumph and reward.

Our Lord said: 'He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved' (St. Matt. xxiv. 13). Who that trusts in God shall have more confidence of persevering than devout religious who serve Him with constancy? Having put their hand to the

plough, they do not look back (St. Luke ix 62); having begun their religious life with fervour, they endeavour to continue it with even greater fervour, hoping, too, to close it in the same dutiful spirit. Having given themselves in all earnestness to God's service in religion, they recognize that they must disregard all inordinate seeking of their own personal comforts, and all neglect of duty in favour of secular friends, or of matters of worldly interest. Having studied the advantages of the religious state, they try to realize them by the careful avoidance of deliberate faultiness, and by zeal for observance. It comforts them, therefore, to feel that they are endeavouring to correspond with God's designs, and to persevere in the way that leads to the heavenly crown. But, as to the inconstant, although with all their faultiness they may yet endeavour to avoid mortal sin, it cannot be said that no shadow of misgiving ever crosses their mind; and what misgiving can be so painful as one bearing upon their salvation?

Happy are religious who with constancy endeavour to avoid the ways of the remiss, and to be faithful to all their obligations. Let them pray for grace to persevere. To them it is said: 'Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Apoc. iii. 11); or, as St. John wrote: 'Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought, but that you may receive a full reward' (2 St. John i. 8).

48. Devotion to the Sacred Passion.

We have as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, Who came into this world, and suffered and died for us. He came to be a victim for our sins, to reconcile us to His heavenly Father, and to restore to us our heavenly inheritance. As to ourselves, we are under a decree of punishment and deprivation, but only for a time—that is, for the time of our earthly career. This career is spent, not in the Garden of Eden, nor in any earthly paradise, but in a land that fell under God's curse, to bring forth 'thorns and thistles' (Gen. iii. 17, 18), in which land man's life is to be one of toil and care.

There are men who would, if possible, make the earth a paradise, and who have no wish to feel the burden placed by God on life—men who, therefore, even murmur and blaspheme under hardships and sorrows. Deluded and ungrateful men! they do not understand the mystery of man's fall, and the consequences which must be endured. Nor do they understand the mystery of redemption, and the rich blessings it has brought to man. Against their own brief and endurable woes, let them set off these immense and everlasting blessings. Let them learn to love their Divine Saviour. Let them study the touching and instructive history of His life, sufferings, and death; and then perhaps they will view otherwise than they now do their temporal trials. What will they not learn, especially from the lessons taught by our Lord's sacred Passion?

When we read the lives of saintly religious, we

notice in most of them a tender devotion to our Lord's sufferings. Religious, in common with all Christians, need to reflect upon the mystery of sin, and upon the blessings resulting from our Lord's redemption. Being themselves the special servants of God, and, like St. Paul, called to glory only 'in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'—by Whom the world is crucified to them, and they to the world (Gal. vi. 14)—they should seek to be in some way united to our Lord in His suffering life.

We will consider how devotion to the sacred Passion (*a*) should create in devout religious a bond of union with our Lord; how (*b*) it should inspire them with a sincere hatred of sin; and how (*c*) it should help them to be patient in their sufferings and trials.

(*a*) When devout religious reflect upon Christ's sufferings, their soul becomes inflamed with a special kind of love. They indeed love God because He has created them, and because His loving Providence watches over them; but the thought that God suffered and died for them establishes a special tie of holy love between them and God. What rapturous love was enkindled in the heart of St. Paul when he reflected that the Son of God loved him and delivered Himself for him (Gal. ii. 20)! 'With Christ,' he said, 'I am nailed to the cross.' We see that when moved by the knowledge of our Lord's exceeding charity in suffering and dying for him, he felt equal to all things. It seemed to create a special bond of love in his relations with our Lord. So should it be with religious.

Devout religious are drawn to devotion to the sacred Passion, and they see in our Saviour's many wounds so many voices proclaiming His love of them, and inviting them to reciprocity of affection—even to bear lovingly for His sake the wounds of the many trials He sends them. Interiorly they exclaim: 'What exceeding love our Lord has shown me! Shall I not love, and always love, One Who has died for me? Shall anything ever lead me to cease from loving Him and being true to Him?' or as St. Paul said: 'Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?' (Rom. viii. 35). These religious not only meditate with affection on the mysteries of the sacred Passion, but they also love the crucifix and pictures of our Lord in His sufferings; for these sacred things convey to them messages of their Saviour's love.

(*b*) In the second place, devotion to the sacred Passion inspires devout religious with a sincere hatred of sin. They see the ravages of sin in the manifold demoralisation witnessed in society which is the deep wound of humanity. In another way they see these ravages in all the cruel wounds suffered by our Lord in His Passion, as foretold by the prophet: 'He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins' (Isa. liii. 5). In our Lord's executioners they see the representatives of all sinners. They note, on one hand, how cruel and unsparing these executioners were, and on the other hand how generous in submission to every form and excess of torment our Lord was.

What impression does all this make upon devout

religious? It inspires them with hatred of sin, and dread of it. It makes them wish they could stay sinners in their evil course, so as to prevent the commission of sin. Religious cannot entertain such sentiments and desires as these without also wishing to correct their own faultiness. Truly devoted to the mystery of our Lord's Passion, they detest their own sins, and they make practical efforts to correct their faultiness, and to lessen the number of their sins. Such religious do not seek to condone their neglect and indiscretions, or to force upon their conscience vain pleas in excuse of their disregard of what is wisely demanded by the spirit and letter of their rule; and nothing causes them so much sorrow as the commission of sin. Through fear of re-opening their Saviour's sacred wounds by sin, they strive in every way to safeguard virtue, and they endeavour to fulfil exactly the requirements both of God's law and of their holy rule. Thus does their devotion to the sacred Passion move them to a true and constant pursuit of holiness in sentiment, desire, and action.

(*c*) Finally, this devotion helps devout religious to be patient in their sufferings and trials. While gazing in spirit upon our Lord's wounds, they study also his interior dispositions. They see his admirable devotedness to his Father's appointments, and his silent, patient endurance of all his torments. How helpful to them is this study! Will they not themselves be willing, for our Lord's sake, to suffer tribulation? Will they complain under their slight trials while they contemplate the exces-

sive sufferings of their Divine Lord and Master? Will they not wish generously and courageously to bear the Cross that our Lord sees well to impose on them? Will they not deem Christian patience one of the virtues which they should at all times cultivate, especially under hardship and opposition?

Let us recall what St. Peter says on this subject. His words are: 'This is thanks-worthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. . . . If doing well you suffer patiently; this is thanks-worthy before God. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps' (1 St. Pet. ii. 19, 20, 21).

What bright examples devout religious have in Saints especially devoted to the sacred Passion—in St. Francis, St. John-of-the-Cross, St. Teresa, and St. Catherine of Siena! Like these great Saints, they, too, will seek to be patient in suffering and adversity.

Religious should regard devotion to our Lord's Passion as a special help to their sanctification. Happy will they be if, practising this devotion, they feel themselves animated with a purer love of our Lord, with a greater hatred of sin, and with a more courageous spirit under the trials of life! These should be the beneficial results of the practice of this devotion. If they be realized, then will steady progress be made in the way of perfection, and rich rewards will be merited.

49. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

Devout religious find in the Holy Eucharist their chief spiritual sustenance and comfort. A lively faith in regard to this heavenly mystery animates them and leads them to it as to what is at once the central object and the mainstay of their love and devotion. The exterior adornment which they give to the altar and tabernacle, ever the objects of their pious care, is only a token of a surpassing devotedness to the Divine Guest of the Eucharist, Whose ever-abiding presence therein inspires them with sentiments of unceasing love and trust.

We will consider that religious love the Holy Eucharist, (*a*) because through this mystery they are united to our Lord, and nourished by Him; (*b*) because it is a continual manifestation of our Lord's love; and (*c*) because of the many consolations it affords.

(*a*) Our Lord said: 'He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me' (St. John vi. 58). Is it, then, surprising that His sworn friends should feel drawn with special affection to this magnificent Sacrament, in which He deigns to become their spiritual nourishment? Therein they are united to Him, so that He abides in them, and they in Him.

Through this Divine institution, without which they could never have raised their desires so high, our Lord inspires religious with a desire of this holy union. Then, having inspired the desire, He satisfies it completely, and in a most real manner, in Holy Communion. And with what happy fruits!

For what should tend, as does the Holy Eucharist, so effectually to lift up their character, motives, and aspirations? And what should move them so powerfully as does the Eucharist to trample under foot everything that is base, vain, and unworthy? Yielding themselves to the attractions and influence of the Divine union effected in the Eucharist, religious are stimulated to correct their faults and to aspire to holy living.

Thus are devout religious helped to aim at the perfection of their calling, for they feel that they can never be too holy. And often, in the moments of Holy Communion, they pass on from these admirable sentiments and desires, to relish with spiritual sweetness the presence of their Lord, the Divine Spouse of their soul, and the delights, too, of His sacramental union with them. This wonderful union is to them a pledge and foretaste of their everlasting union with Him in heaven.

In this Sacrament our Lord refreshes their wearied spirit, and nourishes their soul. He does it, not with earthly meats, but even with his own most sacred Body and Blood. Strengthened by this Divine nourishment, they feel themselves spiritually invigorated and supported; and they are prepared, in the strength of this Divine Food, to do the work of the vineyard, to practise the religious virtues, to fight the good fight, and to combat all that is irregular, base, or unbecoming. For all these reasons, religious love the Holy Eucharist.

(*b*) The Holy Eucharist will ever be the special object of the devotion of religious, because it is a

continual manifestation of our Lord's love. They have left all things for God's sake, and even their purest affections have been brought under a holy discipline, but they are recompensed for their detachment from creatures by a closer friendship with Jesus Christ, Whose presence in the Holy Eucharist ever reminds them of His love for them. Religious abiding near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament are never alone, and are never without a Divine token of God's love. They are reminded of our Lord's promise: 'I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you' (St. John xiv. 18).

There are unhappily, however, some religious who do not discipline the tendencies of their heart, and who run after human regard and affection. Not only are such inordinately-sought regard and affection a cause of distraction, dissipation of mind, and other faults, but they also draw these religious away from the devoted love which our Lord in the Holy Eucharist claims from them. Religious such as these are often wanting in love of the Blessed Sacrament, and in fidelity to their duty in regard of this Divine mystery.

Different is the case of devout religious; for, as our Lord ever continues to manifest His love by the daily Eucharistic Sacrifice, and in Holy Communion, and by His dwelling in their midst in the Tabernacle, so, as their life wears on, do devout religious become ever more solidly enamoured of Him; and these continual tokens of His love ever urge them to greater fidelity in pursuing their holy vocation. They cannot doubt their Saviour's love while they

continue to enjoy the spiritual blessings which accompany these precious and astonishing tokens of it.

(*c*) Finally, devout religious are drawn with special devotion to the Holy Eucharist, because of the many consolations it affords. These consolations proceed chiefly from the nearness of our Lord to them in a visible sacrament, and from the comfort their mind experiences in time of need, sorrow, or temptation, in having recourse to Him in Holy Communion or in His temple. St. Paul reminds us that 'while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord' (2 Cor. v. 6), and this sense of absence from One Who is our First Beginning and Last End inspires devout religious with earnest longings for their everlasting union with Christ. But, in the meantime, Christ comforts them with His hidden Presence in the Holy Eucharist.

They know that the same loving Saviour Whom the Blessed see in all His beauty and glory in heaven is near them, being present with them on earth in this admirable sacrament. Their faith discerns Him thus ever near them. *He* is ever with them to Whom they have consecrated themselves and their works, for Whom alone they are working, and Who is their Lord and Master, and their Divine Helper and Protector. His presence inspires them with comfort, reassurance, and devotedness.

Religious have, therefore, ever with them One to Whom they may have recourse in all their difficulties and needs. They hear His loving invitation: 'Come to Me all you that labour, and are burdened, and I

will refresh you' (St. Matt. xi. 28). How consoling, then, it is to devout religious to carry all their cares to our Lord, Who can, and will, relieve them, or support them under these cares! With what strength and courage they are inspired when united to our Lord in Holy Communion! Do they not feel animated with a desire to do all things, and to bear all things, for His sake? Do they not feel prepared to embrace all the dispensations of His Providence, even though they may be trying or painful? And do not these, their admirable dispositions, proceed from the grace of Holy Communion?

At other times than in Holy Communion, religious have recourse to our Lord in the Holy Tabernacle, and, kneeling before Him, with great confidence they expose to Him their needs, perplexities, temptations, disappointments, and sorrows. Is no grace vouchsafed them when they do this with sincere faith and trust? Do they not feel comforted and relieved, because they have cast all their care upon their Lord, and resigned themselves to embrace dutifully all the appointments of His adorable Will? Even in desolation and deep affliction, they thereupon feel that our Lord shares with them the burden of the Cross He sends them, and this consoles them.

All religious, then, should cultivate with special fervour and delight this consoling and helpful devotion to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Those who fail to do so will lose many rich graces, and no other pursuit will recompense them for their loss. In this mystery, devout religious experience the outpouring of the Saviour's love, which makes them

equal to bearing the yoke of His holy discipline, which takes away from the trials and sorrows of this present life what might depress and dishearten ; and which, when they look to the future, fills their soul with holy longings and comforting assurances.

50. Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus holds a high place in all religious communities, for the Sacred Heart is to them a refuge and a fountain of Divine favours. This devotion had its first sanctuaries in religious communities, and the welcome given it has since been extended in similar communities as the years have rolled by. To religious the Sacred Heart is the treasury of countless graces : and our Lord has said : ' Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also ' (St. Matt. vi. 21). Loving the Sacred Heart, they find their pleasure in the usual forms of piety which have It for object, and they practise special devotions on the days particularly consecrated to It.

We will consider that religious take delight in these manifestations of devotion, (*a*) because the Sacred Heart loves them, and they love It, (*b*) because they trust the Sacred Heart, (*c*) because It is the Model set for their heart, and (*d*) because of the spiritual fruits which this devotion yields.

(*a*) Our Lord, in showing His Sacred Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary, declared that He could not contain the love He bore men, and that it burst forth from Him. Such a declaration of love forces

upon us the reflection of how little we comprehend God's love for us. This surprising love beats in a Heart surpassing all others in holiness, loftiness, grandeur, and every perfection. This is the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This Heart loves all who have in the most complete manner consecrated themselves to It. For them It has special tokens and manifestations of favour, and it outpours Itself upon them in spiritual gifts. These favoured souls are religious. Religious are not, for the most part, unconscious of all this Divine love and bounty; and they fain would make some return. In return, they are drawn with love towards the Sacred Heart; for does not love beget love? Their consciousness of the love of the Sacred Heart for them more than compensates them for the sacrifices they have made, and for the detachment from creatures demanded by their holy vocation. Moreover, the love they bear the Sacred Heart more than satisfies the craving of their poor human heart for some one to love. The holy desire of devout religious is to cultivate this love, so that they may be able to say with the Spouse in the Canticles: 'I languish with love' (Cant. ii. 5), and their sorrow is that they love so poorly and so inconstantly.

(*b*) In the second place, religious cultivate devotion to the Sacred Heart because It is the Heart in which they trust. They study Its qualities and Its ways; and the more perfectly they advance in the knowledge of the Sacred Heart, the firmer does their trust become. To It, therefore, do they trustingly go in their needs, sorrows, and temptations. St.

Peter exclaimed: 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' (St. John vi. 69). Ah! if religious may not have recourse to the best, truest, and most compassionate, helpful, and tender of all hearts, whither shall they go? And, this Heart being ever open to them, if they will not go to It, how vain will it be for them to seek aid and satisfaction elsewhere!

The Sacred Heart inspires, leads, and guides devout religious, and It at the same time sustains them in the battle of life; so that they feel strong, confident, and fearless. With St. Paul they may say: 'If God be for us, who is against us?' (Rom. viii. 31). To this Heart they betake themselves without hesitation or misgiving; for to entertain either of these feelings would be to wound a Heart that cannot be surpassed in sympathy or generosity. When weighed down with worries and perplexities, religious know that they may always carry their cares to the Sacred Heart; and when they have done this, their mind is comforted, and they await with confidence and resignation whatever God may arrange and appoint.

(*c*) In the third place, conscious of their blindness as to their own imperfections, and knowing at the same time that they must be in many ways faulty, religious study the Sacred Heart with a view to their amendment. They hear our Lord say: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart' (St. Matt. xi. 29). They see their own heart carried away by its feelings, sensitive to wrongs, selfish in its pursuits, conceited of itself, and reluctant to bear opposition or reproach. What a faulty heart,

then, is theirs! The Sacred Heart was meek, humble, kind, and unselfish. They see, again, their heart impatient under crosses, shirking pain and humiliation, and desirous of ease and repose. The Sacred Heart was patient and self-sacrificing. They see, too, their own heart self-willed and resentful of control. The Sacred Heart was ever devoted to the Father's will, and submissive even to creatures established in any position of authority. Religious call to mind our Lord's words: 'I have given you an example. . . . The servant is not greater than his lord' (St. John xiii. 15, 16); 'Learn of Me.'

Studying, therefore, the perfections of the Sacred Heart, religious see reason to reproach themselves on account of their imperfections, and they are instigated to strive to imitate the virtues of their Lord and Master. They see how wonderfully they are blessed in being called to study virtue in the school of the Sacred Heart. Often do they say: 'Jesus, meek, and humble of Heart, make our heart like unto Thy Heart.'

(*d*) Lastly, religious delight in practising devotion to the Sacred Heart, because of the spiritual fruits which it yields. When our Lord showed his Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary, He deigned to make many consoling promises to all who should honour It. Holy Church has encouraged the devotion, and enriched it with many indulgences. Devout religious experience many helps and consolations, and at times even spiritual sweetness, as a result of this devotion.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has for religious a

peculiar attraction. As one of its fruits, they realize how truly our Lord is their Friend and Protector—not as though far off, but as ever at hand. They know how to unburden to Him their hearts in the difficulties they experience, and how to cast their cares upon his Sacred Heart. Their confidence is rewarded by a sense of Divine support and blessing, and rich graces are accorded them to bring their works to a successful issue. But especially, as a result of this devotion, are religious maintained in fervour in the pursuit of their vocation, and in their relations with our Lord in the most Holy Sacrament. While this fervour is a spiritual favour which renders the ways of piety attractive, which weans the heart from vain affections, and draws it to the love of the Cross, and which makes our Lord's yoke sweet, and His burden light, it is also a consoling token of predestination.

Let, then, all religious, desirous of such precious favours, seek to advance in devotion to the Sacred Heart. Let them frequently address themselves in fervent aspirations to it. Let them receive Holy Communion in Its honour. Especially let them ever aim at amendment of life, lest by their faultiness or tepidity they wound It. Finally, let them by their devotedness and constancy seek to make amends for the coldness, inconstancy, and ingratitude of numberless Christians. By such tokens of love, honour, gratitude, and confidence will they draw down upon themselves the blessing of the Sacred Heart and the out-pouring of Its mercies.

51. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Religious recognize as their Queen, Mother, and heavenly Protectress and Patroness Mary the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus their Divine Lord and Master, and they therefore manifest special devotion to her. She is no stranger in their affection; and while ever reverencing her, they yet experience no hesitancy or timidity in having recourse to her. They realize what relations should exist between children and their mother, and these are the relations they cultivate as Mary's children with their spiritual and heavenly Mother.

We will consider how devotion to the Blessed Virgin holds so high a place in the piety of religious, (*a*) because of her pre-eminence in dignity, (*b*) her pre-eminence in virtue, and (*c*) her pre-eminence in power.

(*a*) Religious are aware that Saints and learned Doctors of the Church have vied with one another in finding expressions of praise and admiration of Mary because of her exalted dignity. Their faith teaches them to see in her the most perfect of God's works in the whole category of creation, and it therefore enters into the duty of their worship to honour Mary as such; for God Himself is honoured in all His works. Does not the holy writer say: 'Bless the Lord in His works'? (Ecclus. xxxix. 19). And if God takes pleasure in His works, as David says: 'The Lord shall rejoice in His works' (Ps. ciii. 31), will it not afford Him satisfaction to see His beauti-

ful work Mary admired, praised, and honoured by His servants?

Religious—perhaps above all others—endeavour to fulfil all the requirements of religion; and they recognize God's demand of respect, honour, and admiration, not alone on account of the wonders which He has created in the material world, but, moreover and above all, on account of His Divine operations in the realms of grace. In these realms, pre-eminent by reason of her dignity and grace, surpassing even the greatest of the magnificent and glorious Angels, they behold Mary, the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus Christ, their Lord and their God.

In no creature could relationship with God be closer, or dignity be higher, than is witnessed in the case of Mary. Religious, therefore, rightly seek to render her due honour. They adorn her sanctuaries and revere her image; but above all, joined with such tokens of their piety, they offer Mary the loving and reverent homage of their heart. Her pre-eminence of dignity rightly gives her in their heart a pre-eminence of honour, having its place next, and in a lower degree, after the supreme, indisputable, honour and adoration which they offer to God.

(*b*) In the second place, religious show special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, because of her pre-eminence in virtue. They recognize that God fittingly adorned with every excellence in grace and spiritual gifts one who was chosen and prepared by Him to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son, and the Queen of Angels and of men.

It is written: 'As the lily among the thorns, so is

My love among the daughters' (Cant. ii. 2); 'Hail, full of grace . . . . Blessed art thou among women' (St. Luke i. 28)—words of Holy Writ clearly declaring Mary's pre-eminence in virtue. In view of God's endowment of Mary with eminent spiritual gifts, we may rightly refer to her also the praise of the valiant woman: 'Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all' (Prov. xxxi 29). Mary's exalted virtues were displayed in every period and episode of her perfect life. In what prominent relief they stand out in the bitter scenes of her sorrows!

Religious devoutly commemorate Mary's joys and her sorrows, and they study the perfection of all her ways. Thus are they ever instructed by her beautiful example, and drawn to her with ever-increasing love. In Mary they see piety, as displayed in her fervent prayers (St. Luke i. 46); the charming humility of the devoted handmaid (St. Luke i. 38, 48); ready obedience, submitting even to severe trials (St. Matt. ii. 14); thoughtful charity, supplicating favours for the needy (St. John ii. 3); patience in all her sufferings, and devotedness to Jesus in life and in death (St. John xix. 25). How admirable, and worthy of praise, do religious find Mary! They see in her the brightest, unsurpassable, pre-eminent model of every virtue, enriched by God with the fullest measure of grace. Their admiration and love increase with their study of her ways; and they find fresh impulse to devotion towards her as their life wears on.

David said: 'God is wonderful in His Saints' (Ps. lxvii. 36). He is wonderful in His dealings with

Mary above all others Therefore do religious keep her festivals with a holy joy, commemorating with dutiful piety God's gifts to her. Therefore, also, do they multiply in their Oratories, halls, corridors, and cells, statues or pictures of their heavenly Mother; for these representations help to keep her ever fresh in their memory, while they speak to them of her sweet character and pre-eminent virtues.

(*c*) Finally, devotion to the Blessed Virgin holds a high place in the piety of religious because of her pre-eminence in power. They call to mind indeed the power of many of God's servants, but they know that Mary's exceeds theirs because of her dignity, and because of God's predilection. They recall what power Moses, Job, and Onias had with God when they prayed (Exod. xxxii. 14; Job xlii. 10; 2 Mach. iii. 33); but they know that Mary is yet more acceptable in His eyes than these devout servants. They recall the miraculous works performed by the prophets and apostles, and the marvellous works wrought by the Archangels of God, Michael and Raphael, but they know that Mary's prayers can obtain from God even greater favours. As the heavenly Protectress of the Church, and as the powerful Intercessor for the faithful, she has not ceased to obtain favours from God for the Church, for Christian nations, cities, and families, and for individual souls. The record of all her benefactions will never be written.

How often, too, do religious communities, and individual religious, make novenas in Mary's honour, thus manifesting their confidence in her powerful

intercession! Why do they place themselves and their undertakings under Mary's care, if not that they may thereby be assured of blessing and success? Together with all devout Catholics, religious believe in Mary's pre-eminence in power with God, and therefore do they constantly invoke her intercession. They know that she has 'found grace with God' (St. Luke i. 30), and they have a firm belief in her maternal tenderness; so, trusting in her power and compassion, they carry their petitions to her in their many necessities. This is a practical form of devotion to Mary.

Such, then, is the devotion of religious to the Blessed Virgin, and it is not without its happy fruits. These fruits are not only many temporal favours received through Mary's intercession, but also many spiritual gifts, and the maintenance of piety and virtue in her devout clients.

Religious feel that they have always in Mary a loving Mother, to whom they may have recourse; and this is one of the sweet joys which compensate them for their separation from worldly friends and patrons. They feel that Mary's powerful protection will never abandon them in life, and that it will be with them at death. And among the helps ordained by God by means of which they confidently hope to attain to the heavenly reward is her maternal and constant intercession.

52. Devotion to St. Joseph.

St. Joseph has his special place in the devotion of religious. Long before this great Saint was declared 'Patron of the Universal Church,' he was regarded, perhaps universally, by religious as their holy patron, and constant recourse to him as such was had by religious in their spiritual and temporal necessities.

We will consider that St. Joseph is dear to religious (*a*) because of his unique and honourable position in the Holy Family, (*b*) because of his admirable virtues, (*c*) because of the power of his intercession, and (*d*) because he is the special patron of a happy death.

(*a*) How honourable was St. Joseph's office, and how great his authority, we cannot but see, when we consider how he was revered and obeyed by our Divine Lord and by His most holy Mother. To him were transmitted, by the agency of the angel, God's messages concerning Mary and her Child (St. Matt. i. 20; ii. 13, 19). St. Joseph was in charge when Mary journeyed to Bethlehem, during the events there, and afterwards at the Purification. He, too, was in charge during the journey to Egypt, during the years of exile there, and upon the return journey 'into the land of Israel' and to Nazareth. Again was he in charge every year (St. Luke ii. 41) in the journey to Jerusalem to fulfil the requirements of the law; and to him was Jesus subject during many years at Nazareth until the time of his holy death. How honourable Joseph's office was in all those events, and during all those years! God had elected

him as the minister of His own authority and protection over His beloved Son, and over Mary, His Son's most holy Virgin-Mother. How reverent and tender was Joseph's affection for these objects of his care! He was the husband of the spotless Mary, and the foster-father of His own Creator and Lord. He was both master and steward in the chosen household of God on earth, and Jesus and Mary loved him.

Religious bear in mind St. Joseph's high and unique dignity and sacred office, and they know how pleasing to Jesus and Mary is the honour given him. They regard him as their special patron, seeing that, by reason of their consecration to God, religious belong in a particular way to God's household on earth. How many of them, too, live retired from the world as in another Nazareth! If they may not now enjoy association with their earthly friends, religion and faith invite them to spend their life in a holy spiritual union with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

(*b*) St. Joseph, in the second place, is dear to religious on account of his admirable virtues. These virtues are recorded in the 'Litany of St. Joseph,' wherein honour is done to his justice (St. Matt. i. 19), purity, prudence, fortitude, obedience, and fidelity. Upon his festival day, holy Church honours him as the 'faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord appointed over His family' (St. Matt. xxiv. 45). St. Joseph is the silent Saint of the holy Gospels. He comes upon the scene both before and after our Lord's birth, and at other times during our Lord's infancy and childhood; but no words of his are re-

corded. He was a man of action sanctified by ready, patient, and entire obedience, and by recollection. He embraced with dutiful submission all the hardships and anxieties associated with his holy office; and he shared Mary's early sorrows (St. Luke ii. 33, 45-48). Even if St. Joseph's conduct and actions, as recorded in the Gospels, did not set forth his admirable virtues, they would yet be known from the very fact of God's having chosen him for so lofty a dignity and calling.

If our Divine Lord was to live among sinful men, and to be for a sign that should be contradicted, at any rate none but perfect souls should dwell in the sanctuary of the humble abode which was to Him a home, or should be charged by His heavenly Father to wait constantly upon His person. St. Joseph, vowed to virginity, a model of obedience, and a lover of humility and holy poverty, was the first religious Superior in the Christian dispensation. How gentle was he in his commands! how careful in his government! and how true to his trust!

Religious recognize with loving admiration the wonderful virtues of their holy patron. They learn from him to be humble and not to love display; to seek to please God by a perfect obedience; to walk before God with a prayerful and recollected mind; to be patient under the contradictions of life; to sanctify labour by doing all for God; to love the holy virtue of chastity; and to live in union with Jesus and Mary. How useful and admirable are these lessons!

(*c*) In the third place, religious recognize the power of St. Joseph's patronage. When there are anxieties

about temporal affairs, they know how to have recourse to his intercession. They are confident that he has special power in obtaining for them help in such matters; and they feel that, as they belong by special title to our Lord, St. Joseph will act as their wise and prudent protector. Religious know well that, however necessary temporal blessings may be to them, they are bound to set greater value on blessings that are spiritual and everlasting—blessings held in higher esteem by their heavenly patron. They do not therefore confine their petitions to asking through his intercession for earthly favours only, but they devoutly and confidently put under his care and patronage their spiritual progress, petitioning him for the graces they need to be fervent religious. They are encouraged thus to ask the help of St. Joseph's intercession by the thought of his place among the Saints in our Lord's affection and consideration, and they moreover remember St. Teresa's assurance of the efficacy of having recourse to him.

(*d*) In the fourth place, devout religious, ever mindful of the great issues of life, and deeply impressed by the solemn truths bearing on death, look up to St. Joseph as the special patron of a happy death.

They know that even the most protracted life must end in death, and that every man's life is uncertain, seeing that death may occur at any time. What will it avail them to live a long life, if they do not strive to secure for themselves the grace of a happy death? They picture to themselves St. Joseph supported and comforted in his dying moments by Jesus

and Mary—O incomparable consolation!—and they earnestly desire a like happiness and favour for themselves. They feel that St. Joseph is zealous for the salvation of all men, and that he will use his influence with Jesus in their behalf at the supreme moment that must decide their eternal lot.

Because they themselves by their special vocation have become our Lord's sworn servants, religious are confident that St. Joseph will listen to their prayers when they petition him to obtain for them the grace to die a happy death. That they may have some title to enjoy his protection when the end comes they honour him, and invoke his intercession with fervent piety constantly during life. They feel assured that many graces are accorded them through his prayers, and this leads them to hope that he will not fail to obtain for them the final grace of a happy death.

Religious, then, do well to cultivate devotion to St. Joseph. Let them strive to walk as this great Saint walked, in faithfulness to their vocation, with piety of mind and purity of heart, supporting patiently the trials of life, that, amidst its dangers and vicissitudes, they may ever do God's will, and enjoy interior peace. This is the way that leads to the perfection of their present calling, and to the attainment of the glory of the Saints.

THE END

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